PATTERNS OF POWER · THE SIKH ORDER OF THE PUNJAB

The Sikh Order of the Punjab

The Complete Study · 1748 — 1799 — 1849

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with Claude (Anthropic) · 2026

held as tested, not revealed

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A case study in the Patterns of Power series.
Primary sources quoted exactly; modern scholarship paraphrased and credited.
Contested figures given as ranges. Nothing reconstructed from memory.

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Preface and Outline

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The collaboration

This is a case study in the Patterns of Power series, applying the series' framework to the Sikh order of the Punjab — from the constitution of the Dal Khalsa at Amritsar on Baisakhi 1748, through the taking of Lahore by Ranjit Singh in 1799 and the empire he built on it, to the annexation of the province by the East India Company on 29 March 1849. The framework is a lens for reading how any order of power is founded, dressed and held: the floor of force beneath every order; the robe of doctrine laid over the floor to make the force cheap; the settlement that divides the spoils among the armed; the formation that installs in a child, before he can refuse it, the map of whom to defer to and whom to believe; the cost column in which each subject prices defection; the seam that manages the belief on which the whole depends; the default by which an elite coordinates without instruction, each man defending the arrangement by defending himself; and — running through all of it — position logic, the proposition that rulers in like positions converge on like solutions because a position poses a problem with only a few good answers.

The Punjab was chosen because it isolates three things the series had been carrying without separating them.

The first is an order that rose out of the population it came to rule rather than arriving over it. Almost every founding in this collection begins with strangers: an army from outside, a chartered company, a dynasty from another country. This one begins with Jat cultivators from the villages of the Bari Doab, initiated as adults into a body their own grandfathers had been hunted for joining, who took the Punjab from the Mughals and the Afghans and then governed it using the Mughal vocabulary, in the Persian language, through a secretariat trained by the order they had overthrown. What a domestic conqueror does differently from a foreign one turns out to be specifiable: he converts at the level at which he is a stranger and not below it, and he inherits an administration without inheriting its sightlines.

The second is an order that made no claim on the belief of most of the people it ruled and did not appear to need one. For fifty years the coin, the calendar, the sacred

centre, the state's own name and the war cry of its army addressed a community that was somewhere near a tenth of the population, in a province with a Muslim majority. Nobody was asked to believe anything, no formation was designed, and the order ran — competently, without unusual coercion, without a rising in half a century. What that arrangement cost, and the single hour in which the bill was presented, is the study's principal finding.

The third is that this order fell inside two generations, which is not long enough to naturalise. Every other case in this collection has had time to convert its founding violence into scenery. This one did not, and the consequence is visible in the sources: nearly every load-bearing figure in these twelve modules is still contested by identifiable modern parties with national commitments, and the study has had to say so at each point rather than pick a side.

The study was built the way the series is built, one module at a time. The author brought the framework, the direction and the judgement of the whole, and held the collaboration to its disciplines; Claude, Anthropic's model, did the research — verifying load-bearing quotations, dates and figures by search against sources reproducing the primary text before any module was written — and produced the drafts, applying the framework module by module, each presented and confirmed before the next was begun. A seed written by an earlier Claude supplied a starting spine and was wrong in several places; where the research contradicted it, or contradicted the framework's own expectation, the research was followed. The framework is scaffolding and a lens, not a cage, and several of this study's better findings are corrections to what it had predicted — the misls were not fortless, the settlement performed no conversion of relations into things, and the robe turned out not to do the work the framework had assigned it.

The disciplines

The method of information asymmetry. The study's engine is the exact words of one party set beside the exact words of another, with the arithmetic laid out and the sum left to the reader: an East India Company despatch of March 1716 reporting that a hundred men a day went to the block without one recanting from what its authors called a new formed religion, beside the schedule under which a Sikh who killed a Kashmiri paid the government sixteen to twenty rupees and the dead man's family four, or two; the coinage of Lahore proclaiming that sovereignty belonged to Nanak and Gobind Singh, beside the coinage of Patiala forty miles south proclaiming the sovereignty of the Afghan king who had massacred them; a British Governor-General

removing an officer from the political service on the stated ground that he had disclosed documents, rather than on the ground that he was wrong.

Quotation. Public-domain primary sources are quoted exactly and at the length the argument needs. Modern copyrighted scholarship is paraphrased, briefly, and credited; where a translation of a primary text is itself in copyright — Ganda Singh's rendering of the *Jangnama*, the Guru Nanak Dev University edition of the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* — the substance is paraphrased and only short fragments are quoted, with the edition named.

No fabrication. No quotation, date, attribution or figure is invented or reconstructed from memory. What could not be verified is dropped or flagged, never guessed, and this study flags a great deal. It read no Persian, no Gurmukhi and no unpublished archive. Its best evidence — the Khalsa Darbar Records, the Lahore state's own pay, muster and assignment papers — it read through a summary of Sita Ram Kohli's catalogue rather than through the catalogue itself, and it says so where that matters. Contested figures are given as ranges and the reason for each span is stated.

Gravity without partisanship. Suffering is held with gravity, and the study refuses both flattery and demonisation. Legibility is not pardon: to understand how a thing was done is not to forgive its being done. Equally, naming an origin as built is not a debunking — the Islamic order of the western Punjab, laid down over eight centuries by shrines with mapped jurisdictions, was genuinely the world its people lived in, and the men who died for the Khalsa under torture were not dupes. This case comes to the reader through two national historiographies still arguing, and the study has tried to take mechanism and texture from both while declining the numbers of either.

Contribution. Every module returns a refinement to the framework, stated plainly in its closing section, rather than merely applying the framework to the case.

Held as tested, not revealed. The pattern is treated as something discovered and tested against the evidence, not handed down as doctrine — a tendency, never a law, corrected wherever the record refuses it.

What the study returned

Stated compactly, and argued in the modules: that the exit which disciplines a floor is the soldier's and not the subject's, its measure being the distance to the nearest solvent competitor, so that a floor whose armed men hold heritable shares and can reach a rival in a day is a market in violence rather than a monopoly of it; that a consolidator facing such an arrangement does not out-fight it but converts the share into a wage and then abolishes the alternative payroll, and that the closure runs both ways, since men on identical wages have an identical interest that men on separate

shares can never have; that a settlement may run a fourth fiction the collection had not catalogued — *default*, in which the incumbent's title is never questioned and he is instead declared to be in arrears on a tribute the creditor sets, its work being annexation without a *casus belli*; that a conqueror converts at the level at which he is a stranger and not below it, so that a domestic claimant cuts through jurisdiction and leaves the village untouched; that an anchor located in a text and a corporate body rather than in a person is unusually robust to the ruler's misconduct and unusually barren at the succession, and that the legend on a coin records whose belief an order cannot do without; that formation has a third option beside supplying and withholding — subsidising every incumbent formation and designing none, which resembles tolerance and functions as abstention; that recruitment formation and reproduction formation are different machines, the first deeper per head, incapable of compounding, and fed by the persecution it exists to survive, so that it decays in the moment of its victory; that a cost column can be sorted by province rather than by class, the sorting variable being whether a population supplies the floor's own manpower; that the variance of a revenue demand matters more to a subsistence cultivator than its level; that a revenue farm buys ignorance along with predictability, since crop-share assessment cannot function without generating knowledge and a farm replaces all of it with a figure; that where a state prices a subject's death instead of punishing it, the schedule is the cost column in the state's own hand; that where an authority answers a damaging account by addressing the channel rather than the claim, it has already conceded the claim; that the default property of a hierarchy is created by the tenure of a position and not by its value, so that a resumable grant converts an entire elite into claimants on the morning the grantor dies, and that the tell is inspection; that a floor can itself overbreed, soldiers becoming the medium of exchange in a succession no faction can claim; that an apex which cannot pay its floor pays it in authority, and authority once paid out is not recoverable; that a concession extracted in a factional auction is a price and not a right, lasting exactly as long as there are competing bidders; that an assembly of equals is sustained by the precariousness of its members and dissolves when each acquires a separately defensible position; that a conqueror takes the cheapest sufficient share, so that what he declines to take records what he believed he could obtain without paying for it; that the metabolic bill is set by the buffer and not by the shock, and the buffer is a direct function of how the state takes its revenue; that an order which falls before it naturalises leaves an itemised bill nobody can close, so that a disputed founding violence is evidence about the order's duration rather than noise in the sources; and — the study's principal contribution — that cost, benefit and capturability buy compliance while the robe buys defence, that these are not substitutes because they are

purchased for different occasions, and that an order can run for half a century without the second and cannot survive one bad hour without it.

The arc

A landscape opening and twelve modules, each with a framework function and its own evocative title.

Landscape — the two societies on the eve. *This New Formed Religion.* A province three conquests deep that changed hands four times in fourteen months; a Company despatch from Delhi in 1716 reaching for a category that had not existed a lifetime before; and the small body of armed men that constituted itself at Amritsar in the gap between two governments.

1 — The Floor of Force. *The Distance of a Few Miles.* A confederacy in which every horseman could ride to a rival by nightfall and no chief could therefore give an unpopular order; twenty-two guns in 1819 and a hundred and eighty-eight in 1838; and the invention, in the Punjab, of a soldier with nowhere else to go.

2 — The Settlement. *On Condition of Furnishing Horsemen.* Not twelve principalities but something near a hundred and twenty-five; a tribute raised until it could not be paid and an estate taken in satisfaction; and the clause the Maharaja struck out of the Sikh sardars' grants and wrote into the Dogras'.

3 — The Robe. *Struck on Both Worlds.* Eighty-four years of coinage naming no king; an authority seated forty miles from the capital in men who were not the ruler's officers; and four maharajas made and unmade in four years without a single alteration to the metal.

4 — Formation. *No Child Takes the Sword.* An initiation that required a grown man and could not be given to a child; hereditary priests outside the Khalsa, funded by the Khalsa state, teaching Khalsa children; and a book published in 1898 whose title was *We Are Not Hindus.*

5 — The Cost Column. *Four Rupees, and Two Rupees.* Forty-six years without an invading army and a demand that fell with the harvest; against a written schedule pricing a Kashmiri's life, and five hundred emigrants crossing the Pir Panjal on foot.

6 — Extraction. *Rooms Full of Them.* Something over three crores a year; the boundary between the districts the state collected from and the districts it sold; a third of everything to seventy thousand men; and the shawls of an emptying valley stacked in bales behind a fort wall.

7 — Information and Suppression. *The Disclosure of Documents.* An intelligence service that watched every court and no province; a Persian weekly reporting one

capital and not the other; and an officer punished not for being wrong but for the route by which he was right.

8 — Elite Coordination and the Default. *Or to a Total Stranger.* A grant that reverted at its holder's death and was re-granted at the ruler's pleasure; a sovereign branding his own elite's horses to verify their contingents; and a hierarchy in which no man's position was best defended by defending the arrangement.

9 — Plurality or Foreclosure. *The Military Republic.* An assembly that narrowed from every initiated man to a handful of chiefs and then to nothing; five years in which it reopened at the bottom from five elected delegates to a company and tried a wazir; and what closed it again.

10 — Change and Collapse. *Seventy-Five Lakhs.* Six years of fracture before a shot was fired at the British; an army that tripled because every faction was bidding for it; and the price at which a province and its people passed between two hierarchies.

11 — The Grim Accounting. *No Cock Crowing in the Morning.* What the sword took across a hundred and one years; what the metabolic note cost when it was called in a valley that had no reserve left; and why a bill left open two hundred years is evidence rather than noise.

12 — Convergence and Divergence. *Forty-Six Years.* Where this case falls in the collection; the finding that separates compliance from defence; and the strongest case for the defence, stated at its full weight in its own voice and answered without flinching.

A note on sources.

This front matter is descriptive and makes no primary-source claims of its own; every factual assertion summarised here is sourced in the module that carries it, in that module's own closing note. Readers should note three limitations that bear on the whole.

The study consulted no archive. Its best evidence is the Khalsa Darbar Records — some hundred and twenty-nine bundles of the Lahore government's own civil, military and revenue papers, catalogued by Sita Ram Kohli from about 1915 — and it has read them through the reference literature summarising that catalogue. The muster and pay series of 1819 to 1845, the communal composition of the army, and the terms of the individual *jagirs* all rest on that transmission and should be verified against Kohli before being carried further.

Everything before 1799 rests on a tradition preserved in nineteenth-century Sikh chronicles — Rattan Singh Bhangu's *Prachin Panth Prakash* of about 1841 and its successors, codified for modern use by Ganda Singh and Hari Ram Gupta — and the

study labels it as such at every load-bearing sentence rather than promoting it to fact. Two specific cautions are entered in the Landscape and not withdrawn: the bard's scroll usually cited for the succession of 1708 surfaced through a single researcher in the late 1950s and is not relied on, and the two European accounts of the Sikh assembly that everyone quotes are, on the admission of scholars sympathetic to the institution, second-hand.

And the case arrives through two national historiographies in open dispute. The proportion of non-combatants killed at Kup in 1762, the character of Sikh government in Kashmir, and the mortality of the famine of 1831 are all live arguments between parties with modern commitments. Where the study could not settle such a question it has said so and set out both positions, and it has declined the figures on both sides rather than choosing the more congenial. A reader who wants the case settled rather than argued should go to the Khalsa Darbar Records in the Punjab State Archives, to the four hundred and fifty Persian orders edited by Grewal and Banga, to the *sanads* of the individual grants, and to Cunningham's last chapter with Kaye's rebuttal beside it.

LANDSCAPE

This New Formed Religion

The ground before the Dal Khalsa — a province three conquests deep that changed hands four times in fourteen months, the village order older than any of them, and the small body of armed men that assembled at Amritsar in the gap between two governments.

What is new here, and what is not

Every study in this collection opens by reconstructing the ground a conquest fell on, because the alternative is to accept a founding legend's own claim that it began on empty scenery. This case requires the reconstruction to be done with more than the usual care, and for a reason peculiar to it.

Most of the orders examined here begin with a hierarchy already assembled — a dynasty, a garrison, a chartered company, a conquering army with a payroll — which then does something to a population. Here the sequence runs the other way. In 1748 there was in the Punjab a body of men bound together by an initiation rite, a name, a code of conduct and a shared memory of being hunted, and it possessed no territory, no treasury, no capital, no fixed command and no revenue. Within seventeen years it held Lahore. Within fifty-three it had produced a maharaja who struck coin, kept an army drilled by Napoleonic veterans, and ruled from the Sutlej to the Khyber. Nobody in this collection has yet watched that particular transformation happen from the inside, and the whole value of the case turns on getting the starting position right rather than reading it backwards from what it became.

So the questions this opening has to answer are narrow and factual. What was actually there in the Punjab in the 1740s — who held force, who collected revenue, whose word was believed, and by whom. What the Khalsa actually was in March 1748 — how many men, of what castes, in what country, with what equipment. And what had been laid down on that ground before, because a conqueror never meets an aboriginal baseline; he meets somebody else's finished work, and the Punjab of 1748 was finished work three times over.

One discipline has to be stated at the outset and held throughout, because the material invites its opposite. To say that the Islamic order of the western Punjab began as a conquest is not to say that the Punjabi Muslim cultivator of 1748 was living in a borrowed world. It was his world, wholly, in the only sense the word can bear. To say that the Mughal revenue vocabulary was a Timurid import is not to say that the men

who used it were serving a foreign machine; they were doing administration the way administration was done. A thing that was built and then became real is more durable than a lie could ever be, and naming a built origin is not debunking it. The same courtesy is owed in the other direction, and this study will owe it repeatedly: the Khalsa was not a political instrument wearing religious dress. Men died under torture for it in numbers, in front of witnesses who had every reason to record apostasy and recorded none.

The land between the rivers

The Punjab is a plain sloping south-west, watered by five rivers running roughly parallel out of the Himalaya to their junction with the Indus, and the tongues of land between them are the country's real divisions. From the north-west they are the Sind Sagar between the Indus and the Jhelum, the Chaj between the Jhelum and the Chenab, the Rechna between the Chenab and the Ravi, the Bari between the Ravi and the Beas, and the Bist Jalandhar between the Beas and the Sutlej; beyond the Sutlej lies the tract the Punjabis call Malwa, running down towards Sirhind and Delhi.

Those names are worth pausing on, because they are not old. They are Mughal chancery coinages, attributed to Akbar's revenue minister Todar Mal and settled in the great survey of the 1590s, each formed by fusing the Persian-script initials of the two rivers that bound it — Chaj from Chanab and Jehlam, Rechna from Ravi and Chenab, Bari from Beas and Ravi. Only Sind Sagar, the Indus sea, is named otherwise. By 1748 nobody in the Punjab experienced these as the administrative shorthand of a dynasty two centuries dead. They were simply the names of the country, as they still are. That is the first and smallest instance of the thing this landscape is chiefly about.

The plain matters for two further reasons. It is the road. Every army that has entered the Indian plains from the north-west has entered through the Punjab, and between 1739 and 1767 it was crossed by invading forces nine or ten times in under thirty years. And it is horse country in a subcontinent that could not breed its own cavalry mounts in sufficient quality; the trade in Central Asian horses came down the same routes, which is why the men who controlled a stretch of road controlled something worth having even when they controlled nothing else.

Who lived there is harder to state honestly than one would wish, because there was no census until the British took one in 1855 and refined it from 1881. What the later counts show is a province with a Muslim majority — a little over half the population in the colonial enumerations — a large Hindu minority of roughly a third, and Sikhs at something in the range of an eighth to a seventh, concentrated in the central districts around Lahore and Amritsar. For the eighteenth century every figure is an estimate.

The Sikh tradition's own inherited estimate for the population of Ranjit Singh's kingdom is around ten million Sikhs, which no modern scholar accepts; modern estimates put the Sikh share of that kingdom's subjects at something nearer seven per cent. Whatever the precise number, one fact is not in dispute and it governs the whole study: the Khalsa was at every point a minority in the Punjab, and for most of the period a small one, and the majority it would come to rule was Muslim.

The first layer: a conquest that had become the ground

Islam reached the Punjab as an army. Muhammad bin Qasim took Multan for the Umayyads in 712; Mahmud of Ghazni annexed the Punjab in the early eleventh century and Lahore became a Ghaznavid capital; the Ghurids took it in 1186 and the Delhi Sultanate grew out of that conquest. By 1748 this was eight hundred to a thousand years in the past, which is to say it left no trace whatever of having been imposed, because at that depth nothing does.

But the interesting part of the process is not the campaigns. It is what happened afterwards, over centuries, in the countryside — and here the modern scholarship has changed the picture in a way this study needs. Richard Eaton's work on the western Punjab argues that the growth of a Muslim population there was not the result of conquest at swordpoint, nor of low-caste flight from Hindu hierarchy, but of a slow institutional process running through Sufi shrines: pastoral Jat lineages drawn gradually into the orbit of a shrine and its hereditary custodians, becoming sedentary cultivators and Muslims in the same long movement, across generations, in a way that nobody at any point experienced as conversion from one thing to another.

The two great shrines were at Multan and Pakpattan. Bahauddin Zakariya, who brought the Suhrawardi order to Multan, died there in 1262 and his tomb is the prototype of the region's shrine architecture; the Chishti Farid al-Din Ganj-i Shakar died at Pakpattan in 1266, and when Ibn Battuta came through in 1334 the shrine's hereditary head was so identified with the saint that the traveller wrote of meeting Baba Farid himself, a century after Farid's death. Each shrine had a *wilayat* — a spiritual territory with an understood boundary, beyond which lay the next shrine's. That is the detail worth holding, because it means the western Punjab was mapped into jurisdictions by holy men before it was ever mapped into jurisdictions by a chancery, and the shrine map was the one the cultivator lived inside.

And there is a fact about the Sikh scripture that belongs here rather than later. When Guru Arjan compiled the Adi Granth at Amritsar in 1604, he included alongside the compositions of the Gurus the verses of some fifteen earlier devotional poets — Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas, and, at the head of them in point of age, Sheikh

Farid, to whom the standard count assigns one hundred and thirty-four compositions. Whether these are in fact by the Chishti of Pakpattan is disputed among specialists and probably unanswerable. What is not disputed is that the book which would become the anchor of the order that took the Punjab from the Mughals opens its doors to a Sufi saint of the order that had helped make the Punjab Muslim. The new thing was not built against the old world from outside it. It grew in the middle of it and took some of it with it.

The second layer: the Timurid grid

Over the shrine map lay a second and much shallower one, which the Sikh order would keep almost entirely.

Babur took Delhi in 1526; by the settlement of the 1580s the Punjab was organised as the *subas* of Lahore and Multan, governed by a *subadar* with a *diwan* for revenue and *faujdars* for districts, subdivided into *sarkars* and *parganas* and *mahals*, assessed and recorded by a Persian-language establishment of clerks. This was two centuries old in 1748 — young enough that its origin was perfectly well known, old enough that no alternative way of doing the business was in anybody's field of vision.

The thing to notice is how completely it was inherited. When the Sikh chiefs began taking revenue in the 1750s they took it in *parganas*; when Ranjit Singh built a state he had a *diwan* and a *wazir* and *jagirs*; the language of his court chronicles is Persian. Not one item of that vocabulary is Sikh in origin and every item of it survived the conquest of the men who had brought it. An administrative apparatus is the one layer of an order that was explicitly designed, which makes it the one layer that can be explicitly copied, and it is copied by newcomers with a regularity that has nothing to do with affection for its authors.

By the 1740s, however, the grid was failing in a specific and dateable way. In the winter of 1738–39 Nadir Shah crossed the Indus, took Lahore in January, destroyed the imperial army at Karnal in February, entered Delhi in March and sacked it, and left in May carrying the Peacock Throne, the Koh-i-Noor and a treasure whose size the sources put in the tens of millions of rupees. Muhammad Shah was left on his throne and stripped of everything west of the Indus. The Punjab remained nominally Mughal; what it no longer had was any credible expectation that Delhi could defend it or would try. Zakariya Khan, governor of Lahore since 1726 and of Multan since 1737, held the province on the understanding that he would pay for the privilege and be left to manage it. He was the last man to manage it.

The third layer, and the oldest: the village

Beneath both lay a form of settlement older than either, and it is the one this study will need most, because it is where the eventual Sikh settlement of the land came from.

The Punjab village of the plains was not a collection of individual farms and not an estate under a landlord. It was a body of co-sharers descended, in their own account, from a common ancestor who had cleared or settled the land, holding the arable in ancestral shares — the shares called *pattis* or *tarafs*, the same word used for the wards of the village site, which were themselves laid out by lineage — with a portion left undivided as *shamlat*, common land, administered by the *panchayat*, the council of village elders. Under the tenure the British would later classify as *pattidari*, a share was heritable and could be mortgaged but could not be sold; under the variant they called *bhaichara* — brotherhood — the holdings were equalised by value rather than by descent, which the revenue officers of the nineteenth century noted as a distinctively Jat principle.

Two consequences follow and both matter. The first is that land in such a village was not a thing but a relation: a man's share was an expression of his standing in a descent group, which is exactly why it could not be sold, there being nothing to hand over that was not his place among his kin. The second is that when the Sikh bands came to divide territory among themselves in the 1750s, they did not have to invent a rule for it. They had grown up inside one. A chief allotting a village to the leader of the smallest party of horse that had ridden under his banner, and that leader's family dividing it thereafter by the common law of inheritance, was doing at the scale of a district what a Jat lineage had always done at the scale of a field.

And it is worth saying plainly that the Khalsa was overwhelmingly recruited from these people. Not exclusively — the founder of the Dallewalia band was a Khatri, the Ahluwalia chief came from a family of distillers, and the initiation of 1699 had by design admitted men of low caste on equal terms and given them all one name. But the weight of the thing was Jat, and the arrangements it made look like Jat arrangements because they largely were.

What was actually new

Against three layers of naturalised inheritance, one thing in the Punjab of 1748 was genuinely recent, and an outsider had already registered it as such.

The line runs from Nanak, born in 1469 in the Bari Doab, whose teaching gathered congregations across the Punjab and beyond and whose successors built institutions around them — a scripture compiled by the fifth Guru in 1604 and installed at

Amritsar, a town, a martial turn under the sixth. The ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, was executed at Delhi in 1675 on the orders of Aurangzeb. In 1699, at Anandpur in the Sivalik foothills, the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, instituted the Khalsa: an initiation by water stirred with a double-edged sword, a set of bodily marks and articles that made the initiate visible at a hundred paces, obligations enforceable by the community rather than by any state, and a new name — Singh, lion — conferred on every initiate in place of the caste name he had come with. In 1708 Guru Gobind Singh died at Nanded in the Deccan of wounds from an assassin. He left no human successor. The tradition holds that he directed that authority pass to the scripture, which is thereafter treated not as a book about the Guru but as the Guru, enthroned, attended and consulted.

Here the study has to slow down, because the temptation is to take this as a finished design handed down complete and then merely defended for fifty years, and the specialist literature does not support that.

The codes of conduct that define Khalsa practice — the *rahitnamas* — cannot be dated to the tenth Guru's lifetime. W. H. McLeod placed the earliest of them a few years after 1708, two more in the mid-1730s, and the substantial Chaupa Singh code somewhere between 1740 and 1765; the later ones are end-of-century. Purnima Dhavan's study of the making of the Sikh warrior tradition argues from Punjabi and Persian sources that the distinctive rituals and cultural practices of the Khalsa took shape across the whole eighteenth century, driven substantially by the peasant communities who made up its body, rather than arriving fully formed in 1699. On that reading — and it is the reading this study will follow, subject to correction — the Khalsa of 1748 was not executing a completed programme. It was a body still writing its own rule while being hunted, and a good deal of what it would become was being decided in exactly the years this landscape describes.

What is not in doubt is that by 1716 it was already producing behaviour that struck strangers as extraordinary. In 1709 a follower of the tenth Guru known as Banda Singh Bahadur raised the Sikhs of the Punjab plains, took Sirhind in 1710, struck coin and administered a territory between the Sutlej and the Jumna for several years. He was besieged at Gurdas Nangal, starved out, and captured in December 1715 with several hundred companions. They were paraded into Delhi at the end of February 1716 — the prisoners on camels, the heads of the dead on poles ahead of them — and executed at the rate of about a hundred a day.

Two Englishmen were in Delhi at the time, John Surman and Edward Stephenson, in the capital as envoys of the East India Company's Bengal council to the emperor Farrukhsiyar, under standing orders to report what they saw. Their letter to the

Governor of Fort William, dated 10 March 1716, describes the procession and then says this:

> *...for the rest there are a hundred each day beheaded. It is not a little remarkable with what patience they undergo their fate, and to the last it has not been found that one apostatized from this new formed religion.*

Read what that is. It is a commercial despatch, written by men with no stake whatever in the outcome, to a board of directors who wanted to know whether the emperor would grant them trading privileges. It records, as a fact its authors found remarkable enough to mention and had no reason to invent, that a hundred men a day went to the block for a week without a single recantation, when recanting was on offer and would have been accepted. And it supplies, in three words, the category the observers reached for: not a rebellion, not a caste, not a sect of the Hindus and not a heresy of the Muslims, but a *new formed religion* — something that had not been there before and had made men who behaved unlike anyone else.

Banda himself was executed on 9 June 1716, his young son killed in front of him. The rising was over. The formation was not, and the next thirty years are the demonstration of why.

Thirty years of bounty

From 1716 the Mughal government of the Punjab set out to destroy the Khalsa as a body, and it very nearly did.

The instruments were the ordinary ones. Abd al-Samad Khan and after him his son Zakariya Khan issued standing orders for the arrest and killing of Sikhs, forbade villagers to shelter them, made informing compulsory and plunder of Sikh property lawful, and attached money to the business — a graded scale of rewards for information, for a captive delivered alive, and for a head. The figures given in the literature run from ten rupees for information up to fifty or eighty for a head, and every one of them descends from the Sikh chronicles of the nineteenth century rather than from any surviving order; the range should be treated as the tradition's range and not as an archival fact. What is corroborated from more than one direction is the effect: the Khalsa was driven out of the villages into the scrub, the riverine reed-beds and the hills, and survived as small mounted parties living off the country.

The executions were public and deliberately so. The killing ground was the Nakhas, the horse market outside the Delhi gate of Lahore, later renamed Shahidganj — the place of martyrs — by the people who had watched. Bhai Mani Singh, the custodian of

the shrine at Amritsar, was executed there in the later 1730s; Bhai Taru Singh in 1745; the dates for both are supplied by the tradition and vary between accounts.

Twice the policy was suspended in favour of purchase. In 1733 the Lahore government offered the Sikhs a title and a revenue grant, and the offer was accepted — the tradition records the body deliberating and settling on Kapur Singh, a man who kept horses, as the recipient of the title Nawab. In 1748 a later governor made a comparable offer of a dozen villages around Patti and Jhabal. Neither arrangement lasted, and the pattern of both is worth recording now for use later: a government able to kill Sikhs at will nonetheless twice found it worth paying them to stop, which tells you what the killing was costing.

And the killing did not work. The best short demonstration is the massacre remembered as the Chhota Ghallughara, the lesser holocaust. In the spring of 1746 the Lahore *diwan* Lakhpat Rai, whose brother had been killed by a Sikh party near Eminabad, obtained the governor's authority for a general campaign of extermination: the Sikhs of Lahore city rounded up and killed, the reading of the scripture prohibited, and a large force sent into the field. The Sikh bands were brought to bay in the reed marshes at Kahnuwan in what is now Gurdaspur district, driven across the Ravi and the Beas and eventually across the Sutlej into Malwa. The figures given are around seven thousand killed in the field and a further three thousand taken to Lahore and executed there, with totals in the literature running from about seven thousand to about eleven thousand; here too the numbers descend through the nineteenth-century Sikh chronicles and later compilers, and are estimates.

Two years after that campaign the Sikh bands numbered more than twice what they had numbered before it. Force applied to a body of this kind is not a solvent; it is an input, because a code held as sacred converts violence against its holders into the one commodity such a code most requires — proof, delivered by the enemy, that the commitment is not for sale. Every execution at the Nakhas produced a name to be recited to children. The Punjab government spent three decades manufacturing exactly the material its opponent ran on.

Fourteen months, four governments

Now the specific conjunction that this landscape exists to establish, because everything downstream begins in it.

Zakariya Khan died at Lahore on 1 July 1745, having held the province for nineteen years. The tradition records that in the months after his death the Sikh parties reorganised themselves at Amritsar into about twenty-five *jathas* of roughly a hundred horse apiece — perhaps two and a half thousand men in all.

What followed was not a vacuum. It was a surplus of claimants. Zakariya Khan's two sons fell out over the succession: Yahya Khan held Lahore, his brother Shah Nawaz Khan held Multan, and from November 1746 to March 1747 they fought each other for the province, Shah Nawaz winning and taking Lahore. Casting about for a guarantor, Shah Nawaz opened communications with the new Afghan king at Kandahar, Ahmad Shah Durrani, and then changed his mind. Ahmad Shah came anyway. He left Peshawar in December 1747, beat Shah Nawaz outside Lahore on 11 January 1748, and occupied the city the following day. He then marched on Delhi and was stopped near Sirhind, at Manupur, on 11 March 1748, in a battle in which the Mughal wazir Qamar-ud-Din Khan was killed and the wazir's son Muin ul-Mulk — Mir Mannu — took over the line and drove the Afghans off. Ahmad Shah withdrew towards the Indus. Mir Mannu was appointed governor of Lahore in April.

Between the Afghan withdrawal and the new governor's arrival, on the Baisakhi festival of 29 March 1748, the Sikh bands assembled at Amritsar. By then, on the tradition's count, there were sixty-five of them. What they did there was to resolve — by *gurmata*, a resolution taken in the presence of the scripture — to combine the whole fighting body under one name, the Dal Khalsa, the army of the Khalsa, grouped into eleven divisions each with its own chief, its own banner and its own name, under the supreme command of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, with the elder Kapur Singh acknowledged as senior. Later in the same year they built a fort at Amritsar, Ram Rauni, which was the first ground the body had ever held in its own right.

Set the dates beside each other and the shape is exact. In fourteen months the Punjab was claimed by a Mughal governor, by his brother, by an Afghan king and by a new Mughal governor; and in the three weeks between the third of these leaving and the fourth arriving, on a festival date fixed by a calendar nobody could confiscate, at a shrine that had been repeatedly seized and repeatedly retaken, the fourth party constituted itself as a single body with a command. It acquired an assembly and a chain of command before it acquired a fort, and a fort before it acquired a rupee of revenue.

One more figure belongs in this picture, because he is the period's clearest demonstration that the province's problem was not weak government but too many governments. Adina Beg Khan was a Punjabi Arain — a cultivating caste, not a Mughal service family — who had risen from collecting the revenue of a single village near Sultanpur Lodhi to the command of the Bist Jalandhar Doab. He was appointed to hold the Doab against the Sikhs and instead spent twenty years keeping every party in the province alive and none of them dominant. He fought the Sikhs when Lahore was watching and dealt with them when it was not; he served the Mughals, then the Afghans, then the Mughals again; he recruited Sikh officers into his own troops; and in

1758, needing a counterweight to both, he brought the Marathas up from Delhi to take Lahore, undertaking to pay them a lakh a day on the march, before dying a few months later as governor of a province he had spent his career making ungovernable by anyone else. Whatever the Punjab of the 1740s was short of, it was not men with claims on it.

The Marathas themselves are the last party to place. In 1748 they were not yet in the Punjab — they were pressing north through Malwa and the Gangetic Doab, they had been appealed to by Delhi during Nadir Shah's invasion and had not arrived, and they were four years from a treaty obliging them to defend the empire against the Afghans and thirteen from Panipat. But they were the other power in the subcontinent capable of claiming the north, and every calculation made in Lahore after 1750 was made with them somewhere in view.

What the Khalsa actually was in March 1748

The baseline, stated as narrowly as the sources allow.

It was small. Twenty-five bands of about a hundred horse in 1745, sixty-five bands by March 1748; if the bands stayed at anything like their earlier size that is a force in the low thousands of horse, in a province of several million people. Even generous readings do not make it an army by the standards of the forces that had just fought at Manupur, where the Mughal side is reckoned in the tens of thousands.

It was mounted, and almost nothing else. Cavalry armed with sabre and matchlock, fighting by raid, ambush, feigned retreat and dispersal, capable of destroying a baggage train or a revenue convoy and incapable of standing in line against artillery. It had no siege train, no artillery worth the name, and until Ram Rauni no fortified place. Its logistics were the country it rode through.

It was drawn overwhelmingly from the Jat cultivating population of the central Punjab — the Majha, the Bari Doab country around Amritsar and Lahore — with a real but smaller presence of Khatris, artisans, and men from the castes the older order ranked lowest, several of whom appear in the record as leaders and not merely as followers. Its geography was the Majha first, spreading into the Jalandhar Doab and across the Sutlej into Malwa, which is the country it had been driven into in 1746 and which it therefore knew.

It held no territory, collected no revenue, maintained no court, kept no records that survive, and had no ruler. What it had instead was a list of things none of its competitors had: an initiation that made membership a decision rather than a birth; a name conferred at that initiation which replaced the name a man's caste had given him; a body of practice, still being codified, that regulated conduct in circumstances where

nobody but the practitioner could have enforced it; a founder narrative with a named succession and a martyrology being lengthened annually by the government of Lahore; a fixed sacred centre at Amritsar; a fixed calendar on which the whole body assembled; and a procedure by which that assembly could bind everyone in it.

The rest of this study is the account of what that list turned out to be worth, what was paid for it and by whom, and what happened to it when the men who held it stopped being hunted and started collecting the revenue themselves.

Reading the Punjab of 1748 against the framework

Three things: one refinement offered for testing across the modules that follow, one application of the collection's standing account of inherited orders that comes out in an order the collection did not expect, and one discipline this study will have to hold in every load-bearing sentence.

The refinement: a durable armed competitor is manufactured not by a vacuum but by a contested claim. The collection has held that the ruled do not crack a floor, and nothing here disturbs that; the Khalsa did not rise, and when it tried to rise, under Banda, it was destroyed inside seven years. But the standing account has tended to treat the opportunity for a new claimant as an *absence* — a gap in government, a province left unheld. The Punjab of 1716 to 1745 was not that. It was governed continuously and competently by one man for nineteen years, and that man very nearly finished the Khalsa, because a single sovereign who is intermittent in the countryside is nonetheless free to spend an entire campaigning season on a third party when it becomes organised enough to be worth a campaign. Zakariya Khan did exactly that, repeatedly.

What changed after July 1745 was not that the province emptied but that it acquired more claimants than it could seat: two brothers fighting for eighteen months, an Afghan king crossing the Indus, a Mughal wazir dying at Manupur and his son inheriting a province he had to reconquer, and a *faujdar* of the Doab whose whole interest lay in none of them winning. Under those conditions no claimant can spend a season on the third party, because each is fully occupied being the others' problem — and the third party's mere continuity of presence, which was worth nothing while one sovereign held the field, becomes the scarcest good in the province.

The form to test is therefore this: **expect the emergence of a durable armed competitor to date not from a province's worst government but from the first season in which two claimants of comparable weight are both present and both distracted; and expect that competitor's first institutional acquisitions to be a command and a calendar rather than a fortress and a treasury, because what it is selling is continuity and what a calendar buys is the ability to count and bind the**

whole body on a fixed date without holding any ground at all. The Dal Khalsa acquired a supreme command and a binding assembly on 29 March 1748, a fort later that year, and a revenue five years after that. If that order of acquisition holds elsewhere it is a finding; if the following modules show the sequence was really the other way round, it must be withdrawn.

The recursion, applied — and the ranking runs backwards from the obvious. Three orders lay on this ground before the Khalsa. Islam in the Punjab was eight to ten centuries deep and had been driven into the countryside not by armies but by shrines with mapped jurisdictions and hereditary custodians, until it was simply the shape of the world for the majority of the population. The Mughal administrative apparatus was two centuries deep and its origin was perfectly well known. The village of co-sharing lineages was, as a form, older than either, though any particular lineage's claim to any particular soil was often much younger than it said.

The order in which the rising power dealt with them was the inverse of their depth. The shallowest layer it took whole and free: the *parganas*, the *diwan*, the Persian chancery, the doab names, every one of them retained by men who had spent thirty years being hunted by the government that supplied them. The deepest layer it could neither take nor dislodge, and would spend its entire existence governing a population formed by it. And the middle layer, the village, it did not deal with at all, because it *was* the village — its recruits, its inheritance rules, its habit of dividing a thing into ancestral shares and leaving a portion common.

The general form worth testing: **where a new order rises out of a population rather than arriving from outside it, the layer it cannot see as a layer is its own, and the layer it takes free is the administrative one — because administration is the only layer of an inherited order that was ever explicitly designed, and a thing that was designed can be copied by anyone who can read.** The Durrani case found a conqueror inheriting his sightlines along with the apparatus he captured. This case suggests the complement: a domestic claimant inherits the apparatus without the sightlines, because he was never in the position that built them, and what he cannot see is not the world outside the province but the ordinariness of his own social material.

And the discipline: nearly everything narrated above is known through nineteenth-century texts, and this study will say so every time it matters. The count of twenty-five bands and then sixty-five, the resolution of 29 March 1748, the schedule of bounties, the tolls of the massacres, the deliberation that made Kapur Singh a Nawab — these descend, in the main, from Rattan Singh Bhangu's *Prachin Panth Prakash* of about 1841 and its successors, and were codified for modern use by Ganda Singh and Hari Ram Gupta, both writing from inside the tradition. That does

not make them false. It makes them a tradition's account of its own founding, which is a category this collection knows how to handle and must not handle carelessly. The warning signs are the ones already learned elsewhere: a number too round, a date too apt, a scene too well fitted to a later community's self-image.

Two specific cautions are worth entering now. The eyewitness bard's scroll usually cited for the passage of authority to the scripture in 1708 — the Bhatt Vahi — surfaced through a single researcher in the late 1950s, and when a university team went looking for the keepers of these ledgers in 1978 they reported finding families of Saivite mendicants whose records concerned quite other communities. This study will not rest anything on it. And the two European accounts of the Sikh assembly and its *gurmata* that everyone quotes — George Forster's of 1783 and John Malcolm's of 1805 — are, on the admission of scholars sympathetic to the institution, second-hand: neither man appears to have watched one sit. When the study reaches the question of whether that assembly ever actually bound anyone against his will, it will have to answer it from what people were recorded as *doing*, not from what visitors were told.

What the record will bear without help is the letter from Delhi in March 1716, which was written by men who had no interest in the matter, to a board of directors who had none either, and which reports that when a hundred men a day were beheaded for a week not one of them took the exit that was offered. Whatever else was being built in the Punjab in those years, it was strong enough by 1716 for that to be true, and a stranger looking for a word for it reached for one that had not existed a lifetime before.

A note on sources. The one extended primary quotation is from the letter of John Surman and Edward Stephenson to Robert Hedges, President and Governor of Fort William, dated Delhi, 10 March 1716, preserved in the East India Company records and printed in the nineteenth century, most accessibly in J. T. Wheeler's *Early Records of British India* (1878) and reproduced by Ganda Singh in *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*; it is quoted here as printed in that line of transmission and is in the public domain. Reproductions differ on two words — some give "that fate" for "their fate," and "the new formed religion" or "his new formed religion" for "this new formed religion" — and no manuscript collation has been made for this study; the phrase on which the argument leans, *new formed religion*, is constant across every reproduction consulted. The Persian and Punjabi administrative terms used here — *suba*, *subadar*, *faujdar*, *diwan*, *pargana*, *mahal*, *jatha*, *gurmata*, *patti*, *taraf*, *shamlat*, *panchayat* — are given in their standard forms; no Persian or Gurmukhi text is quoted verbatim in this opening, and the Sikh chronicles are reported rather than quoted, pending verification against printed editions in the modules that require them.

Reported from the tradition, and flagged as such. The reorganisation of the Sikh bands into twenty-five *jathas* after Zakariya Khan's death, their growth to sixty-five by March 1748, the *gurmata* of Baisakhi 1748 constituting the Dal Khalsa under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the eleven divisions, the schedule of bounties on Sikh heads, the prohibition on reading the scripture during Lakhpat Rai's campaign, and the deliberation that conferred the title of Nawab on Kapur Singh in 1733 all derive from the Sikh historiographical tradition — Rattan Singh Bhangu's *Prachin Panth Prakash* (c. 1841), Gian Singh's later *Panth Prakash*, and the modern codifications by Ganda Singh and Hari Ram Gupta — supplemented by the Persian accounts of Bute Shah and the anonymous *Ahwal-i Dina Beg Khan* and by Syad Muhammad Latif's *History of the Panjab* (1891). They are not independently attested in eighteenth-century archival material and should be read as a tradition's account of its own formation.

Contested figures, given as ranges. The bounty on a Sikh head is variously given as ten, twenty-five, fifty or eighty rupees according to whether the payment was for information, for a live captive or for a head, and every figure descends from the sources named above. The dead of the Chhota Ghallughara of spring 1746 are usually given as about seven thousand killed in the field and about three thousand executed afterwards at Lahore, with totals in the literature running from roughly seven thousand to eleven thousand; these are estimates and not counts. The size of the Sikh bands is calculated here from the traditional figure of about a hundred horse to a *jatha* and should be treated as an order of magnitude only. The Sikh share of the population of Ranjit Singh's later kingdom is given here as somewhere near seven per cent on the strength of modern scholarly estimate, against a traditional figure of some ten million Sikhs that no modern scholar accepts; the colonial censuses from 1881, which are the earliest hard counts and postdate the period, show Muslims at a little over half of the Punjab's population, Hindus at about a third and Sikhs between an eighth and a seventh. Nadir Shah's plunder of Delhi and the date of the battle of Karnal are given loosely, the sources differing by eleven days according to whether the Julian or Gregorian calendar is used. The date of the institution of the Khalsa is given as Baisakhi 1699 without a Gregorian equivalent, since the conversion is disputed and the dispute is not material here. The execution dates of Bhai Mani Singh and Bhai Taru Singh vary between accounts and are given approximately.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For the shrine-centred Islamisation of the western Punjab, the sedentarisation of pastoral Jat lineages through the orbit of the shrines at Multan and Pakpattan, and the concept of a shrine's *wilayat* as a bounded jurisdiction, Richard M. Eaton's work on the political and religious authority of the shrine of Baba Farid and on shrines, cultivators and Muslim

conversion in Punjab and Bengal. For the argument that Khalsa martial culture and ritual took shape across the eighteenth century under the hand of the Jat peasantry rather than arriving complete in 1699, Purnima Dhavan, *When Sparrows Became Hawks: The Making of the Sikh Warrior Tradition, 1699–1799* (2011), read here from the published summaries of its argument and reviews rather than the full text, which the formation module will require. For the dating of the *rahitnamas*, W. H. McLeod's *Sikhs of the Khalsa*, as reported in the review literature; Karamjit K. Malhotra's dissent on the *Nasihatnama* is registered and not adjudicated. For the general political narrative of the eighteenth-century Punjab and the Sikh state, J. S. Grewal's *The Sikhs of the Punjab* in the New Cambridge History of India, and Indu Banga on the agrarian system. For the source-critical problems of the Bhatt Vahis, the findings reported by Balwant Singh Dhillon of the Guru Nanak Dev University survey of 1978; for the second-hand character of Forster's and Malcolm's accounts of the *gurmata*, the acknowledgment made within the Sikh scholarly literature itself. The naming of the Punjab doabs under Akbar's revenue settlement, attributed to Todar Mal, and the formation of the names from the Persian-script initials of the bounding rivers, follow the standard reference literature and Abu'l-Fazl's account. The classification of *pattidari* and *bhaichara* tenures follows the nineteenth-century revenue literature as summarised in the standard Sikh reference works, and is flagged as a colonial taxonomy applied retrospectively to arrangements it did not create.

MODULE 1

The Distance of a Few Miles

The floor of force — a confederacy in which every horseman could ride to a rival by nightfall, the two conquests of Lahore that bracket the case, and the arithmetic by which a paid infantryman came to be worth more to a ruler than a mounted peer.

The city taken twice

This case has no single founding conquest. It has two, performed on the same city by men of the same community thirty-four years apart, and almost everything the study is about lies in the difference between them.

On 16 April 1765 a body of Sikh horsemen entered Lahore and took it from Amir Singh, nephew of the Durrani governor Kabuli Mal. The standard accounts put the force at about two thousand, under Lehna Singh and Gujjar Singh of the Bhangi confederacy, admitted through a gate opened for them from inside. A day later Sobha Singh of the Kanhaiya arrived with two hundred more. The soldiers began to plunder; a delegation of neighbouring landholders came to the sardars and asked them to stop it so that the city might prosper and remain the Guru's cradle; the sardars closed the gates and punished the looters. Then the three of them divided Lahore between them, quarter by quarter, and ruled it as a triumvirate for the next thirty-four years.

On 7 July 1799 another Sikh force entered Lahore. It came in two columns, one under Sada Kaur of the Kanhaiya and one under her son-in-law, an eighteen-year-old chief of the Sukerchakia named Ranjit Singh, and it came at the invitation of leading men of the city who had had enough of the Bhangi sardars' grandsons. Chet Singh gave up the fort and was granted a comfortable estate. Nothing was divided. On 12 April 1801 Ranjit Singh was proclaimed Maharaja.

Two conquests of one city by one community. The first produced a partition, because the men who made it had a rule for dividing what they took and no rule at all for holding it undivided. The second produced a monarchy. The question this module has to answer is what changed in the machinery of force between those dates, and the answer is not the one the histories usually give.

How the confederacy fought

Take the first floor apart and see what it was made of.

It was cavalry, and very nearly nothing else. The misl horseman carried a sabre and a matchlock and rode a horse he owned. He fought in bodies of a few score, and the tactics that survive in description are the tactics of men who could not afford to stand: flanking, cutting a detachment off from its supplies, seizing a river crossing, taking the baggage train, riding down foragers and messengers, and above all the running skirmish — a party closing on the enemy at speed, discharging, wheeling away to reload at the gallop, and coming back. Against a formed line with guns this was useless and everyone knew it; against everything else it was very hard to answer, because there was nothing to fix. Modern military historians of the period, Fauja Singh among them, call the misls guerrilla armies and then immediately qualify it, because they were far larger than guerrilla forces and did possess some artillery — but the qualification matters less than the shape, which was a force built to make a province ungovernable rather than to take a fortress.

How many men were in it is a question the sources will not honestly answer. The figures in general circulation — twenty thousand horse to the Bhangi, ten thousand to the Karorsinghia, eight to the Kanhaiya, seven to the Nakai, six to the Ahluwalia, five to the Ramgarhia, and a conventional total of about seventy thousand across all the confederacies — come from the nineteenth-century compilations of Lepel Griffin, Syad Muhammad Latif and their successors, and behind them from the tradition. No muster roll survives. These are paper strengths of the kind a chief quotes about himself, and the honest position is that the confederacy at its height could probably put tens of thousands of horse in the field when it chose to and that nobody counted them.

What can be established is the terrain the force operated in, and one detail of it explains a great deal. John Malcolm, who was with the British army in the Punjab in 1805 and published his account in 1812, noted in passing that

> *All the villages in the Penjáb are walled round; as they are in almost all the countries of India that are exposed to sudden incursions of horse, which this defence can always repel.*

A mud wall stops cavalry. It does not stop artillery. So the Punjab of the confederacy was a country of several thousand small enclosures, each of which could shrug off the arm that everybody had and none of which could withstand the arm that nobody had. Add to that the forts. The misls built them constantly — the rule of the *pattidari* allotment was that a leader who received land containing a town was obliged to raise a fort and set up an administration in it — so the country filled up with small strongholds, held by cavalry, besiegeable by nobody. That is the physical equilibrium of the confederate period, and it is a stalemate of a particular kind: not weak, but

symmetrical. Every chief could raid every other chief's country and no chief could reduce any other chief's fort.

What a horseman was paid with, and where he could go

Now the part that decides everything, and it concerns not weapons but employment.

A misl chief did not pay his horsemen money. He gave them land, and the rule by which he gave it is worth setting out exactly, because it is the constitution of the whole arrangement. Under the *pattidari* system used for newly taken territory, the chief took his own share first and divided the rest among his principal sardars in proportion to the number of horsemen each had brought; those sardars divided their share among the *surkundas*, the leaders of the smallest parties of horse; and the surkundas divided theirs among the individual troopers. Other tenures existed alongside it — *misaldari*, *tabadari*, *jagirdari* — and which one applied depended on how much the recipient mattered to the chief. But the governing principle was constant. A share of the conquest was proportional to the force contributed to it, all the way down to the individual mounted man.

Two things follow, and the second is the one the histories skate over.

The first is that this made every level of the force a stakeholder rather than an employee, and the settlement it produced was correspondingly wide. That is a real fact about the misl period and it should not be diminished.

The second is that a stakeholder who can move takes his stake's *cause* with him, and in the Punjab of the confederacy he could move. Malcolm again, describing the position of the ordinary Sikh horseman around 1805:

> *The lower order of Sikhs are more happy: they are protected from the tyranny and violence of the chiefs, under whom they live, by the precepts of their common religion, and by the condition of their country, which enables them to abandon, whenever they choose, a leader whom they dislike; and the distance of a few miles generally places them under the protection of his rival and enemy. It is from this cause that the lowest Sikh horseman usually assumes a very independent style, and the highest chief treats his military followers with attention and conciliation.*

That is the floor of the confederate period stated with more precision than any modern account manages, and it was written by a professional soldier looking at the thing with a professional's eye. Note exactly what the mechanism is. It is not that the horseman was hard to kill, or that the chief was weak, or that the religion forbade tyranny — Malcolm mentions the religion but puts the weight on *the condition of their*

country. It is that a competent armed man who found his chief's terms unacceptable could be under a solvent rival's protection by nightfall, because the rival was forty miles away and wanted him. Membership of the Dal Khalsa attached to no particular misl; a man who was initiated could ride under any banner and change banner when he liked.

A floor whose armed personnel have a nearby, willing alternative employer is not a monopoly of violence. It is a market in it. And the price such a floor pays is not paid in wages, which were land and were plentiful. It is paid in orders. A chief in that position cannot issue an instruction his men would resent, cannot hold them in a siege line for a season, cannot garrison an unpopular post, and cannot discipline a favourite. He negotiates his own army into the field every time he wants it there, and the histories record him doing exactly that.

Thirty-four years of a floor that could not be owned

Set that mechanism against what the confederacy actually did between 1765 and 1799 and the record stops looking like a decline from unity into squabbling and starts looking like the arrangement working as designed.

The coin comes first, because it is the confederacy's own statement of what it thought it had done. Malcolm records the legend on the rupee struck after the Sikhs took Lahore, and his rendering of it is the earliest European report of the inscription:

> *Coined by the grace of Khálsah jí, in the country of Ahmed, conquered by Jasa Singh Calál.*

Two features of that are worth marking now and reading properly later. The authority claimed is the Khalsa's, not the coiner's; and Jassa Singh is named with the caste-name Kalal, the distiller, which a man of the older order would have been at pains to lose. Malcolm places the coining at the Afghan evacuation of Lahore under Timur Khan; the standard accounts date the Jassa Singh coin to the Sikh occupation of 1761, and the dating cannot be settled here.

Then the wars. Not the Afghan wars — the internal ones. In 1775 near Dinanagar a coalition of Kanhaiya, Sukerchakia and Ahluwalia met a Bhangi-led coalition and killed Ganda Singh Bhangi; the chiefs who fought each other there had all sat in the same assembly at Amritsar. Malcolm, writing thirty years later, describes the general condition:

> *Quarrels have been transmitted from father to son; and, in a country where the infant is devoted to steel, and taught to consider war as his only occupation, these could not but multiply in an extraordinary degree... every village has become an*

object of dispute; and there are few, if any, in the Penjáb, the rule of which is not contested between brothers or near relations.

And his verdict on the constitution that was supposed to hold it together is worth quoting whole, because it is the sharpest short judgement any contemporary passed on the confederacy and it comes from a man who thought the Sikhs formidable:

...not to their boasted constitution; which, whether we call it an oligarchy, which it really is; or a theocracy, which the Sikhs consider it; has not a principle in its composition that would preserve it one day from ruin, if vigorously assailed.

Joseph Davey Cunningham, writing in 1849 from eight years among the Sikhs, gave the same object a kinder name and called the settlement the Sikhs made at Amritsar after the fall of Lahore a *theocratic confederate feudalism*. Both men are describing the same thing: a body that could act as one when threatened from outside and could not be made to act as one for any other purpose.

The proof that this was a real limitation and not a moralist's complaint arrived in the 1790s from a direction nobody in the Punjab had prepared for. Daulat Rao Sindhia's brigades, drilled and officered on the French model under General Perron, checked the Sikh raids into the upper provinces and compelled the Sikh chiefs south of the Sutlej to acknowledge obedience and pay tribute. Malcolm's assessment of what would have happened next is a professional's estimate, made with knowledge of both sides:

...it was in the contemplation of General Perron, had the war with the English government not occurred, to have subdued the Penjáb, and made the Indus the limit of his possession: and every person acquainted with his means, and with the condition and resources of the Sikhs, must be satisfied he would have accomplished this project with great ease, and at a very early period.

That is the measurement. A floor that had absorbed nine Afghan invasions and outlasted the greatest cavalry commander in Asia was, by the last decade of the century, reckoned by informed observers to be at the mercy of a few thousand drilled infantry with guns. Ahmad Shah Durrani had beaten the Sikhs in nearly every engagement he fought and lost the Punjab because he could not stay; Perron's brigades could stay, and that changed the arithmetic entirely.

What Ranjit Singh actually built

The conventional account of what happened next is that Ranjit Singh hired European officers who modernised his army. The European officers are real, they are well documented, and they are not the explanation. The near-contemporary who knew the Punjab best said so in 1849, of the two Napoleonic veterans who arrived at Lahore in 1822:

> *It has been usual to attribute the superiority of the Sikh army to the labours of these two officers and of their subsequent coadjutors, the generals Court and Avitabile, but in truth, the Sikh owes his excellence as a soldier to his own hardihood of character, to that spirit of adaptation which distinguishes every new people and to that feeling of a common interest and destiny implanted in him by his great teachers.*

Cunningham is arguing about martial quality. The structural point is adjacent to his and harder: the Frenchmen arrived in 1822, and the transformation that mattered was already running.

It can be dated and counted, because unlike almost everything before 1799 it left an archive. The Lahore government kept pay and muster records, and those records survived the annexation and lay in the Punjab civil secretariat until Sita Ram Kohli went through them in the 1910s. The series he compiled is the hardest evidence this study will handle:

In 1819 the Lahore state maintained 7,748 regular infantry, 750 regular cavalry and 3,577 irregular cavalry, with 22 guns, 190 swivels and 834 artillerymen. By 1823 the regular infantry stood at 11,681. By 1828 it was 15,825, the regular cavalry had risen to 4,315, and the artillery had grown to 130 guns, 280 swivels and 3,778 men. By 1838, the year before the Maharaja's death, there were 26,617 regular infantry, 4,090 regular cavalry, 10,795 irregular cavalry, and 188 guns with 280 swivels served by 4,535 men. The figures exclude the feudal levies of the jagirdars, for which no comparable series exists.

Read the shape of that rather than the totals. Across nineteen years the guns multiplied more than eightfold and the men serving them more than fivefold. The paid regular infantry — an arm the confederacy had essentially not possessed — more than tripled, and by 1838 outnumbered every category of horse combined by close to two to one. And the irregular cavalry, which is to say the arm the misls had been made of, grew by roughly a third, from three and a half thousand to under eleven, while everything around it was multiplying. It was not abolished. It was diluted until it no longer decided anything.

The pay is the other half. The regular infantryman of the Lahore army drew something in the region of seven or eight rupees a month — a figure that comes through the scholarship on Indian military wages rather than from the records directly, and should be held loosely — and he drew it late. Osborne, inspecting the regular troops in 1838 as military secretary to the Governor-General, remarked on how far into arrears their pay habitually ran, upwards of a year being unremarkable. That is a bad wage, badly paid.

It was also, from the ruler's side, transformative, and for a reason that has nothing to do with muskets. Set the two kinds of soldier beside each other.

A man holding land in return for producing a stated number of horsemen is a partner. What he owns is a share of a conquest, held by a rule his ancestors used to divide fields; it is heritable, it does not depend on the ruler's favour continuing, and if he takes his contingent elsewhere he takes both the men and their equipment with him. He must be conciliated, and if he is not, a rival forty miles off will conciliate him.

A man drawing seven rupees a month from a treasury owns nothing. His musket belongs to the state, his drill is useless to him outside a formed battalion, and there is no rival treasury within reach because the whole point of the exercise was that there is now only one. He cannot ride a few miles to the protection of his chief's enemy, because his chief has no enemy left with a payroll. What Malcolm identified in 1805 as the horseman's structural independence — *the distance of a few miles* — was not defeated in battle. It was made irrelevant by removing the destination.

So the sequence of the annexations reads differently once the payroll is in view. Ranjit Singh took Amritsar in 1805, and the pretext he used was a demand that the Bhangi widow Mai Sukhan hand over the great gun the Bhangis had captured from the Afghans, the Zamzama, together with the Lohgarh fort; the demand was refused and the city and fort were taken. Dal Singh of Akalgarh went in 1802; the Dallewalia territories after Tara Singh Ghaiba's death in 1807; Sialkot in 1808; the Nakai lands; the Bhangi holdings at Gujrat in 1809. In most cases the dispossessed chief was not killed or exiled but given a *jagir* — an estate held of the Maharaja. He kept an income and lost a retinue, which is the whole transaction stated in one clause.

And the Zamzama, taken by the Bhangis from an Afghan army and taken from the Bhangis' heirs by Ranjit Singh, went down the Indus in 1818 to Multan.

What the floor did when it was used

Multan is where the new machine can be seen doing the thing the old one could not.

Ranjit Singh had gone against Multan seven times between 1802 and 1817. Every attempt ended the same way: the field force beaten, Nawab Muzaffar Khan withdrawing into the fort, and a negotiated tribute — presents and a promise in 1802, seventy thousand rupees in 1805, five horses in 1807, an annual tribute after 1810. Seven cavalry campaigns and seven purchases, because a cavalry army cannot take a fort and both parties knew it.

The eighth was different. The army moved in January 1818 and took the outlying forts; the siege of the city began in March; the heavy guns, the Zamzama among them, came down the Indus from Lahore and opened on the walls. On 2 June a party of Akalis under Sadhu Singh found a breach, the army came in behind them, and Muzaffar Khan and several of his sons were killed making a sortie. Multan and its revenues — put at over twenty lakhs a year — passed to Lahore. The following year the army took Kashmir, deciding it at Shopian on 3 July 1819. In 1823 it beat an Afghan force at Nowshera; Peshawar was occupied and, in 1834, annexed.

Every one of those was a place that the confederacy in its whole existence had raided, taxed and failed to hold. The variable that changed was not courage and not generalship. It was a siege train and men who would stay in front of a wall for eleven weeks because their living depended on it.

The floor's texture for the people underneath it is a separate question and this module can only place a marker in it. Malcolm, writing of the Punjab he saw in 1805, recorded the position of the Muslim majority in the Sikh-ruled districts in terms that sit awkwardly beside the reputation the order carries:

> *These, though very numerous, appear to be all poor, and to be an oppressed, despised race. They till the ground, and are employed to carry burdens, and to do all kinds of hard labour: they are not allowed to eat beef, or to say their prayers aloud, and but seldom assemble in their mosques; of which few, indeed, have escaped destruction.*

The same author, on the same pages, reports that the cultivator's share of the produce was nominally a half, that the chief never took the whole of his share, and that in no country was the cultivator treated with more indulgence. Both of those are Malcolm's, they are two sentences apart, and they are not a contradiction: a light revenue demand and a confessional disability are different instruments and can run together. Which of them describes the Punjab better, and how the balance moved after 1799, is the business of later modules, and it will have to be settled from revenue rates and appointments rather than from any observer's summary.

Who could not leave

The last thing a floor has to be checked for is exit, and here the answer sorts by who is being asked.

The cultivator had none. He lived in a walled village on ground his lineage had held for generations, in a plain where the next such village was a few miles away and identical, and the walls that repelled cavalry did nothing about a revenue demand. There is no evidence of significant flight from the Punjab in this period and no obvious place to flee to; the hills were poorer, the Afghan country was worse, and the desert was empty. The mechanism that held him was not a garrison. It was the plain fact that his living was in that soil.

The horseman had an exit until roughly 1809 and then did not.

And the chiefs had one, briefly, in a specific direction, which is why the Treaty of Amritsar of 1809 matters more to this module than its diplomatic content suggests. By fixing the Sutlej as the limit of Ranjit Singh's expansion, the treaty put the cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs — Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Kaithal and the rest — under British protection, and thereby did two things at once. It gave the Sikh chieftaincy the one durable refuge from Lahore it would ever have, which is why those states survived into the twentieth century when every misl west of the river was absorbed. And it turned the Lahore army west and north, towards Multan, Kashmir, Peshawar and the Afghan frontier, which is where the next thirty years of conquest went. The border that foreclosed the Maharaja's easiest expansion is also the border that determined the shape of his empire.

Reading the floor against the framework

One refinement, one correction the evidence forced on this study's own expectation, and one note about where the evidence gets better.

The refinement: the exit that disciplines a floor is the soldier's, not the subject's, and its measure is the distance to the nearest solvent competitor. The collection has been careful about the ruled's inability to leave — the circumscribed plain, the metabolic dependence, the closed door that turns a contract into a trap — and that machinery is doing its ordinary work here, since a Punjabi cultivator had nowhere to go and everybody knew it. But the misl chief's problem was never his peasants. It was his horsemen, and they could go, and the going was cheap: a day's ride to a chief who wanted them and would pay in the same currency of land shares. The consequence was not that the chiefs were poor or their armies small. It was that no chief could give an order his men would resent, which is a form of weakness that never

shows up in a muster roll and shows up constantly in the record as an inability to sustain a siege, hold an unpopular garrison, or make a resolution stick.

The form to test elsewhere is this: **the question to ask of any floor is not how it fights but what a member of it forfeits by leaving — and where the armed personnel hold a heritable share rather than a wage, and a competitor with an equivalent share to offer stands within a few days' travel, the floor is a market in violence rather than a monopoly of it, and its holder governs by conciliating his own army.** The corollary predicts the cure: a consolidator facing such an arrangement will not try to out-fight it, because it cannot be caught; he will convert the share into a wage and then eliminate the alternative payroll. Ranjit Singh did both, in that order, and the European drill-masters arrived after the decisive work was done. On the evidence of the Lahore government's own records, his real innovation was fiscal and it consisted in inventing, in the Punjab, a soldier who had nowhere else to go.

And the refinement carries a debt that should be entered now rather than discovered later. Closing the soldier's exit closes it in both directions. Twelve chiefs holding twelve heritable shares cannot combine, because each has something different to lose and each is the others' rival for it. Twenty-six thousand men drawing the same wage from the same treasury, a year in arrears, have precisely one interest and it is identical for all of them. The arrangement that made the army obedient to a strong Maharaja is the arrangement that gave it, for the first time, a collective grievance and a means of expressing it. Whether that is what happened after 1839 is a question for later; that the material was created in the 1820s is established here.

The correction: the confederate floor was not fortless, and this study came in expecting it to be. The working guess carried into this module was that the misls held nothing fixed and fought entirely by mobility. The tenure rules refute it: a leader allotted land containing a town was required to build a fort and administer it, and the Punjab of the confederacy was consequently dense with small strongholds. The right description is not a floor without fortifications but **a floor without siege capability on any side** — many forts, no train of heavy guns, and therefore an equilibrium in which everybody could raid and nobody could reduce. That is a distinct and more interesting condition than mere mobility, and it identifies the exact instrument that ended it. Twenty-two guns in 1819 and one hundred and eighty-eight in 1838 is not a modernisation programme; it is the deliberate manufacture of the one capability whose absence had kept the Punjab divided for half a century, and its first full use was against an Afghan fort at Multan that seven cavalry campaigns had failed to take.

And a note on where the evidence changes. Everything in this study before 1799 rests on tradition and on European observers writing decades after the events.

Everything after it can rest, where it matters, on the Lahore state's own pay and muster records, which survived the annexation and were worked through in the second decade of the twentieth century. The muster series quoted above is of a different evidentiary order from the seventy thousand horsemen of the misl period, and readers should be told where the line falls, because the temptation in a case like this is to let the good archive of the monarchy lend its authority backwards to the tradition of the confederacy. It does not. The confederacy's numbers are what its heirs remembered; the monarchy's are what its paymasters wrote down.

A note on sources. The extended primary quotations are all from John Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs* (London: John Murray, 1812), quoted verbatim from the public-domain text — the walled villages and their capacity to repel horse; the lower order of Sikhs, their freedom to abandon a chief, and the resulting independence of the horseman and conciliation by the chief; the transmission of quarrels and the contest over every village; the judgement on the Sikh constitution as an oligarchy that would not survive a day if vigorously assailed; the assessment of General Perron's prospects; and the description of the condition of the Muslim population and of the cultivator's half-share. Malcolm was in the Punjab with Lord Lake's army in 1805, read the Adi Granth in copy with the help of a Nirmala interpreter, and is a hostile-to-neutral professional observer rather than a partisan of either side; his account of the misl period is nonetheless a British officer's, written while his government was deciding what to do about the Sikhs, and should be read as such. The coin legend — *Coined by the grace of Khálsah jí, in the country of Ahmed, conquered by Jasa Singh Calál* — is Malcolm's rendering and is the earliest European report of it; he attaches it to the Afghan evacuation of Lahore under Timur Khan, while the standard accounts date the Jassa Singh coinage to the Sikh occupation of 1761, and the discrepancy is left open here. Malcolm's own report that the Sikhs lost upwards of twenty thousand men in the action of February 1762 is noted but not relied upon; the range for that massacre remains as given elsewhere in this study.

The quotation from Joseph Davey Cunningham on the European officers is given as reproduced in the modern literature and has *not* been collated against the 1849 printing of *A History of the Sikhs*; it should be checked before it is leaned on further, and the argument here does not depend on its exact wording. Cunningham's characterisation of the post-1765 Sikh polity as a *theocratic confederate feudalism* is his own phrase and is confirmed in the editorial apparatus of the standard reissue. Cunningham served eight years among the Sikhs, was present as a political officer at Badowal and Aliwal, and was removed from his political appointment after the book appeared; that

circumstance is part of why he is worth reading and also part of why he is not disinterested.

Reported from the records, and flagged as such. The muster and artillery series for 1819, 1823, 1828 and 1838 is the table compiled by Sita Ram Kohli from the Lahore government's own records in the Punjab civil secretariat, and is reproduced here as it appears in the standard reference literature rather than from the archive itself; Kohli's work on those records was undertaken from about 1915 and the underlying material is the Khalsa Darbar Records. The table excludes the *jagirdari* levies. Wikipedia-level totals for the Sikh Khalsa Army of 1838–39 — a hundred and twenty thousand men in all, with sixty thousand regulars — circulate widely and are not used here, because they are not reconcilable with Kohli's series without knowing what the compilers counted.

Contested figures, given as ranges or flagged. The misl cavalry strengths (Bhangi twenty thousand, Karorsinghia ten, Kanhaiya eight, Nakai seven, Ahluwalia six, Ramgarhia five, and a total of about seventy thousand) descend from Griffin, Latif and the later compilations and are paper strengths; no muster roll survives and they should not be treated as counts. The force of about two thousand at the taking of Lahore in April 1765, and the two hundred who arrived with Sobha Singh Kanhaiya, follow the standard historiography deriving from Hari Ram Gupta. The regular infantryman's pay of seven to eight rupees a month is reported from the scholarship on Indian military wages, at second hand, and has not been checked against the Lahore pay records; Osborne's observation on arrears is likewise reported from a fragment rather than collated with the 1840 printing of *The Court and Camp of Runjeet Sing*. Multan's annual revenue after annexation, put at over twenty lakhs, is a reference-literature figure. The provenance of the Zamzama — captured from the Afghans by the Bhangis in 1764, demanded from Mai Sukhan in 1805, and sent to Multan in 1818 — follows the tradition and the school-textbook historiography descended from it, and is used here as an emblem rather than as load-bearing evidence.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For the misl tactical repertoire and the classification of the misls as something larger than guerrilla armies, Fauja Singh's work on the military system of the Sikhs, as summarised in the reference literature. For the *pattidari*, *misaldari*, *tabadari* and *jagirdari* tenures, the division of allotment in proportion to horsemen contributed, and the obligation on a *surkunda* receiving a town to build a fort, the nineteenth-century revenue literature as digested in the standard Sikh reference works — a colonial taxonomy applied retrospectively, as noted in this study's opening. For the sequence of Ranjit Singh's annexations of the misl territories and the substitution of *jagirs* for retinues, the standard accounts. For the siege of Multan and the campaigns of 1818–1834, the standard military narratives;

casualty figures for those actions are not given here because the sources do not support them.

MODULE 2

On Condition of Furnishing Horsemen

The settlement — what a hundred and twenty-five principalities actually divided, the tribute a chief was set and could not pay, and the clause the Maharaja struck out of the Sikh sardars' grants and wrote into the Dogras'.

The number that was never twelve

Every account of the eighteenth-century Punjab begins by naming twelve confederacies, and the number is a piece of retrospective tidying that has survived because it is easy to remember.

The research of the last half-century has dismantled it. Indu Banga, working through the Lahore state's records in the 1970s, found far more than twelve Sikh chiefs holding territory in their own right. Veena Sachdeva went further and counted: in the upper doabs of the Punjab there were not twelve but **fifty-six** principalities under Sikh rulers. In the plains below them there were about thirty-two more under non-Sikh chiefs, of which thirty were Muslim and two Hindu. In the hills there were something near forty, most of them under Rajput houses whose lineages predated the Mughals by centuries. The total for the late eighteenth century comes out at roughly a hundred and twenty-five independent political units, and the combined number of Hindu and Muslim rulers exceeded the number of Sikh chiefs.

Hold that figure, because it changes what the word "settlement" can mean here. The Punjab of 1790 was not a province divided among a dozen Sikh confederacies. It was a landscape of a hundred and twenty-odd small sovereignties, of which the Sikh ones were the most numerous single bloc, held the best-watered ground in the Bari and Bist doabs, and were still a minority of the whole. Any account of who got what has to be an account of at least two settlements — the one the Sikhs made among themselves in the country they held, and the one Ranjit Singh made afterwards over all hundred and twenty-five.

What the Qazi saw

The strongest single statement about the first of those settlements comes from a man who despised the people he was describing.

Qazi Nur Muhammad of Ganjaba rode with the Baluch contingent on Ahmad Shah Durrani's seventh invasion in the winter of 1764–65 and completed his verse

account of the campaign the following summer. He calls the Sikhs dogs and infidels on nearly every page; he was writing to be paid; and he devotes a section to explaining to his own side what they were up against. At the end of it, turning from their conduct to their country, he tells his readers that they have — in Ganda Singh's translation of 1939 — *divided the Punjab amongst themselves*, and bestowed it, in his phrase, upon every young and old man.

That sentence is the reason this module exists, and it has to be handled in two motions.

First, what he was in a position to see. The Qazi crossed the upper doabs with an invading army in the winter of 1764–65, in the months when the Sikh chiefs took Sirhind and then Lahore. That is precisely the country — the Majha and the Jalandhar Doab — where the Sikh allotment was densest and most recent. What he reports is an accurate description of the ground he rode over, generalised to a province he did not cross. He never saw the lower Sind Sagar, where a dozen Muslim principalities stood untouched, or the hills, where the Rajput houses were still collecting their own revenue. The line is not rhetoric. It is a correct local observation stretched by a man who took the part of the country he had seen for the whole of it.

Second, and more interestingly: within the country he did see, the description holds up against the tenure records, and the settlement it describes is of a kind this collection has not previously encountered.

A settlement that went all the way down

The rule by which the Sikh chiefs divided what they took has already been set out in this study and bears restating in one clause, because everything in this section follows from it. Under the *pattidari* allotment applied to newly conquered territory, the chief took his share, divided the remainder among his principal sardars in proportion to the number of horsemen each had brought, and each of those divided his portion among the leaders of the smallest mounted parties, who divided theirs among the individual troopers. A share was proportional to the force contributed, and the chain ran to the man on the horse.

What the trooper then held was not a wage and not a tenancy. It was a share of the same kind his lineage already held in its own village: heritable, mortgageable, not saleable, with a portion of the ground left undivided as *shamlat* under the village council. A conqueror in the Punjab of the 1760s did not have to invent a way of dividing land, because he had grown up inside one.

So the Qazi's astonished sentence is describing something real. Set beside the settlements this collection has examined elsewhere — a thousand chiefs given eight

square miles each, a class of grantees seated over a population that got nothing — a rule that distributes down to the individual armed man is genuinely wide, and the study should say so plainly rather than hedge it.

But a settlement's width is measured by two figures and the second is who is eligible. The marker of inside and outside in the misl period was the initiation. Any *amritdhari* Sikh was a member of the Dal Khalsa, could ride under any banner he chose, could change banner when he liked, and could hold a share of the allotment. Nobody else could hold at all. And on the demographic estimates available, the Sikhs were somewhere in the region of a small fraction of the Punjab's population throughout. The settlement was wide within the body and the body was narrow. Both halves of that are findings and neither cancels the other.

What was underneath, and what did not change

The revenue the misl chiefs drew came out of an arrangement that began as a protection contract. From about 1753 the Sikh bands offered *rakhi* — a stated guarantee of a village's persons and property against invasion, against the exactions of officials and zamindars, and against local plunder, in exchange for a share of the revenue collected twice a year after the two harvests. The rate ran between an eighth and a half and was usually a fifth. Villages, singly and in clusters, took it. By 1764 and 1765 the arrangement had dissolved into direct rule, because the protectors had become the government.

Now the question the framework insists on asking of any settlement: what did the instrument find, and what did it convert?

The answer here is unusual and it is negative. **The misl settlement performed no conversion at all.** It did not turn office into estate, or collective patrimony into partible share, or occupation into vacancy. It inserted a new claimant on the revenue above the village and left the village exactly as it was. The cultivator went on holding under his lineage's rules; the *shamlat* stayed common; the *panchayat* went on allocating; and the sale of land to an outsider went on being blocked by the customary right of pre-emption. The Sikh chiefs collected where the Mughal *faujdar* had collected, in the same *parganas*, using the same vocabulary.

The rate is where the contemporaries disagree, and the disagreement is worth preserving. James Browne, writing in 1788 from a Persian account he had commissioned, reported that the misl chiefs collected a moderate rent, mostly in kind, that they never levied their whole share, that they left old and hereditary tenures alone, and that new land could be broken out of the abundant waste. Malcolm in 1812

reports the same thing from the other end of the confederacy's life: that the chief's nominal share was half the produce and the cultivator's half, that

> *the chief never levies the whole of his share: and in no country, perhaps, is the Rayat, or cultivator, treated with more indulgence.*

Both men are describing an arrangement in which the demand was moderate because it was uncollectable at the margin — a chief whose horsemen could ride to a rival forty miles off was in no position to squeeze the villages those horsemen came from. And Malcolm, in the same pages, describes what the settlement looked like from outside it, to the Muslim majority of the districts under Sikh chiefs: a numerous, poor and despised population doing the carrying and the hard labour, forbidden to say their prayers aloud, with few of their mosques left standing. A light revenue demand and a confessional disability are different instruments and they ran together. The settlement was wide within the Khalsa and the country was not the Khalsa.

What the second settlement found

Ranjit Singh's instrument met something quite different from a village, and this is the point at which the framework's ordinary machinery has to be re-pointed.

What he faced was not land held under a tenure he needed to make grantable. It was a hundred and twenty-five *sovereignties* — chiefs who ruled, taxed, judged and garrisoned in their own right, some of them for six centuries. His problem was not that their land could not be transferred. It was that they were not holding land at all in the relevant sense; they were holding jurisdiction.

The conversion he performed, accordingly, was not relations into things. It was **sovereignty into income**. Raja Bhup Chand ruled Guler; after 1813 he was a man permitted to draw the revenue of villages near Haripur. Raja Dyal Chand ruled Chenini; after the Dogras had taken three-quarters of it he was a man drawing the revenue of Rudhar as a subsistence allowance. Nothing visible changed for the villages: the same families, often the same ground. What changed was the source of the claim. Before, it came from the chief's own lineage, his own fort and his own armed men. After, it came from an assignment recorded at Lahore.

That is the settlement's whole technology in this case, and the men on the receiving end understood it perfectly, which is the best available evidence of what it was. Bhup Chand of Guler was offered a jagir of five thousand rupees and refused it. Bir Singh of Nurpur was offered twelve thousand at Kahlot and declined; he spent seven years confined in the fort at Gobindgarh, and went on trying to recover his state until he died

in 1846. Men do not go to prison over the size of a pension. They go to prison over the difference between drawing an income from a place and being its ruler.

The instrument: a debt the chief could not service

The mechanism by which the conversion was performed is documented across dozens of cases and has an identical shape in nearly all of them, which is what makes it an instrument rather than an accident.

It began with vassalage. Banga's formulation is exact: suzerainty implied superior claims but limited control, and vassalage left the subordinate chief enjoying the substance of power inside his own principality. A chief was required to pay tribute, to place troops at the suzerain's disposal, to conduct no foreign dealings without permission, and to have his successor's accession confirmed at Lahore. Within those limits he still ruled.

Then the tribute moved. And the record of the movement is the settlement's real document.

Fateh Khan of Sahiwal was made tributary in 1804 with a contingent of twenty-five horse and twenty-five camels; in 1809 the money tribute was fixed at twelve thousand rupees a year; in 1810 it was raised to eighty-five thousand; he could not pay it; and in February 1810 the Maharaja marched, took the fort by surprise, and carried him to Lahore a prisoner. Ahmad Khan Sial of Jhang was set at sixty thousand rupees in 1803; the demand was raised to a lakh in 1816; he was reluctant; his territories were confiscated in 1817. The Raja of Kullu was set at forty thousand in 1810 and fifty thousand in 1813; he refused the increase and his country was plundered. Bir Singh of Nurpur was made tributary in 1809, summoned to Amritsar in 1815, asked for a heavy *nazrana* he could not raise, imprisoned, his camp plundered and his territories occupied. And Multan, seven times, was made to pay: presents in 1803, seventy thousand in 1805, seventy thousand again in 1807, and then in 1810 a demand of two lakhs on the stated ground that this was the sum Muzaffar Khan had been paying Kabul.

The pattern is the same object seen from a dozen angles. Establish a tributary relation; raise the demand until it exceeds what the chief can or will produce; treat the shortfall as the occasion; annex. The thesis literature on the period states the mechanism without embarrassment: in many cases the Maharaja went on increasing the tribute until the chief was either unable or unwilling to pay, which produced a situation in which annexation appeared to be called for even where it was not otherwise justified.

What the Maharaja himself is recorded as saying at the point of foreclosure is worth having, because it states the exchange in one breath. The court chronicle of Sohan Lal Suri gives his message to Jafar Khan of Khushab in 1810 — hand over the fort and stop resisting; a jagir will be granted *for your survival*; your relations will be in safe custody; the horses and valuables in the fort will be returned to you. Fort for pension, family for hostage, moveables thrown in. Khushab was annexed the same year and some villages were assigned for maintenance.

This is a fiction of a kind the collection has not yet catalogued, and it is worth naming precisely because it does not look like one. The chief is never told his title is bad. He is not told his land is empty, or that he already owned what he is being given, or that his collective holding is divisible into shares. He is told he is **in arrears**. The instrument is a debt whose amount the creditor sets, and the estate passes in satisfaction of it. Its work is done before any force is applied: by the time the columns move, the chief is not a sovereign being conquered but a defaulter being distrained, and everybody in the transaction — including the chief — is operating inside a frame in which the demand was legitimate and only the payment failed.

Two kinds of grant, and the clause that separates them

What the dispossessed then received is the heart of this module, and the distinction runs through the whole ruling class of the Lahore kingdom.

The grants came in two kinds. The **subsistence jagir** was given to a dispossessed chief or his dependants for maintenance, and it carried, in the words of the administrative literature, no obligation to the Lahore government whatever. Zabar Khan, the Afghan governor of Kashmir, received twenty-five thousand rupees in Kishtwar after Shopian. The Sajjada Nashin of Pakpattan — the hereditary custodian of Baba Farid's shrine, whose predecessors had ruled the country on both banks of the Sutlej — received something near thirteen thousand after the annexation of 1820, described in the record as a mark of respect. Bahadur Khan of Malot received a small jagir and a cash grant. Muzaffar Khan's two surviving sons at Multan received subsistence jagirs and a robe of honour. These are pensions. They buy silence, they cost the treasury a fixed and knowable sum, and they come with no men.

The **service jagir** was a different instrument entirely, and its terms are stated in the records in numbers.

Fateh Khan, nephew of the dispossessed chief of Kasur, received Maruf on condition of maintaining a hundred horsemen. The heirs of Jalal Khan Bhatti at Pindi Bhattian received a service jagir on condition of providing a contingent of thirty. Ahmad Yar Khan Tiwana of Nurpur, after his fort was taken in 1817, received

Jhawarian, worth ten thousand rupees, subject to the service of sixty horsemen. Fateh Khan of Sahiwal — the same man who had been carried to Lahore in irons — was released after a year and given a jagir worth fourteen thousand four hundred rupees at Jhang, with which he was to furnish fifty horsemen; his son Langar Khan later held the same and drew, besides, eleven thousand two hundred and thirty-six rupees in cash for his own service, that of his two sons, and forty-two troopers. The Chatthas of Rasulnagar received a service jagir when the dead chief's son agreed to serve.

And the Sikh sardars? The British revenue administration, working through the settlement records after the annexation, recorded the position in a sentence that has stayed in the Punjab land manuals ever since: the Sikh sardars between the Beas and the Sutlej had been reduced to subjection like their brethren west of the Beas, and

> *held their estates on condition of furnishing horsemen in time of war.*

So the answer to the framework's sharpest question about any settlement — what was demanded in return, and did it include armed service — is unambiguous here, and it is the opposite of the modern colonial answer. The nineteenth-century colonial settlement grants land and office in exchange for tax collection and political compliance while a different arm of the same government strips the grantee's capacity for organised violence; the whole art of it is to pay a warlord to stop being a warlord. Ranjit Singh did not do that. He paid warlords to keep being warlords in his service. The clause the colonial instrument deletes is the clause his instrument was built around.

The framework has a standing prediction for settlements of that shape, and it is not a happy one: where the grantees are left armed, expect the medieval failure mode and date the first revolt.

Where the clause came due

It is possible to date it, and to name the family.

In 1815 the Maharaja annexed Jammu. The annexation did not take, because a Dogra Rajput of the Jamwal clan named Mian Dido — a descendant of a seventeenth-century Raja of Jammu, holding a small hill jagir at Jagati — refused to accept it, gathered a band of perhaps fifty men, and conducted a resistance with popular backing that the Lahore forces failed to end for something over a decade.

Three brothers of the same Dogra Rajput community, Gulab Singh, Dhian Singh and Suchet Singh, sons of Kishora Singh, had entered the Maharaja's service as common troopers. In 1820 they were made jagirdars of Jammu, Bhoti, Bandralta, Chenini and Kishtwar — five contiguous hill territories — **for the maintenance of**

four hundred horsemen, on the condition that they would extirpate Dido. Dido was killed in 1821 and Kishora Singh was made Raja of Jammu.

Then follow the accumulation across the next fifteen years, because none of it is hidden. Suchet Singh received Bhadu in 1820 and Bandralta in 1822 when he was created Raja, and Mankot was conferred on him afterwards. Dhian Singh became wazir of the kingdom. Hira Singh, Dhian Singh's son, received Jasrota in 1834. Gulab Singh was sent to take the Raja of Rajauri in 1820 and did; the Gakkhar chiefs of Pharwala were imprisoned by him and by a Sikh sardar and two of them died in confinement. In 1828 the Maharaja demanded a daughter of the Katoch house of Kangra in marriage for Hira Singh; the refusal of that demand became the occasion for the annexation of Kangra, and the territories taken were conferred on the Dogras.

The historians of the period state the consequence without qualification, and this study reports it as their finding rather than its own: the territories conferred on the Dogra chiefs made them powerful enough to become the principal agency of the kingdom's collapse after the Maharaja's death in 1839. Whether that judgement survives the evidence of 1839 to 1846 is a question this study will have to settle later and will not assume now.

But the arithmetic of the settlement can be stated now, because it is a matter of instruments rather than outcomes. Across forty years the Maharaja took the Sikh confederacies that had made the conquest — the Bhangis, the Kanhaiyas, the Ramgarhias, the Nakais, the Dallewalias, the Faizullapurias, the Karorsinghias — and converted their chiefs into holders of estates conditional on producing horsemen for a state they no longer had any share in. In the same forty years he took three Dogra Rajput troopers from Jammu, outside the Khalsa in birth, creed and formation, and gave them five hill territories, four hundred horsemen of their own, the office of wazir, a Raja's title and a marriage into the oldest ruling house in the hills.

He removed the retinues of the men whose grandfathers had assembled at Amritsar. He granted retinues to men whose grandfathers had not.

Who was inside, and how the boundary moved

The last question the settlement has to answer is what marked the line, and the honest reply is that the line moved and did not disappear.

Under the confederacies it was the initiation. A man who had taken the double-edged sword and the name could hold a share of the conquest; nobody else could hold anything, and the country's Muslim majority appears in Malcolm's pages as a labouring population under disabilities.

Under the Maharaja it became office and service, and the change is real and should be credited at full weight. Muslims and Hindus held commands, revenue charges, artillery, provinces and jagirs. Ghulam Murtaza of Qadian, whose family the Ramgarhias had humiliated, was invited back and restored to a large part of his ancestral estate, and he and his brothers served on the Kashmir frontier. Fateh Khan Tiwana's descendants held the salt mines. The Kharal chiefs of Kamalia kept forty villages through the whole reign. Muslim and Hindu chiefs across the western plains appear in the record holding service jagirs with contingents.

And the boundary is still there in the numbers. The scholarship's finding, from the Lahore state's own assignment records, is that the Sikhs formed the dominant element in the ruling class, took the largest share of the jagirs assigned by the Maharaja and his successors, and took a much larger share of revenue-free grants than Hindus and Muslims — though, on the same finding, not at their expense.

There is a single sentence in Lepel Griffin's compilation of the Punjab families, published in 1865 from the records of the men themselves, that catches what the change looked like from inside a displaced house. Khuda Yar Khan, son of the dispossessed Tiwana chief of Nurpur, came to court and

> *found himself a person of very small importance at Lahore, where no one of the Sikh nobles cared for his long genealogy.*

He was appointed rough-rider to the Maharaja at a thousand rupees a year and superintended the hunting until he died in 1837. His father had ruled a country. That is not a story about religious persecution; nobody obstructed his prayers or took his land. It is a story about a settlement in which lineage had ceased to be a currency and service had become one, and about what that felt like to a man who had inherited a great deal of the first and none of the second.

One refusal from the other direction deserves recording beside it. When Pakpattan was annexed in 1820 the Maharaja proposed to hand it to Jamadar Khushal Singh, one of the highest men at his court. The Jamadar declined it, the chronicle records, on the ground that it was the place of a holy man. Whatever else the Lahore settlement was, a Brahmin-born Sikh officer could still refuse the revenue of a Chishti shrine because of what the ground was.

Reading the settlement against the framework

Two contributions and one correction, of which the first is offered as an addition to the collection's catalogue and the second is the framework's own prediction coming true in a case it was not derived from.

The addition: a fourth settlement fiction — *default*. The collection has three, each doing a different job. *Vacancy* declares the land empty and does dispossession. *Recognition* declares the grantee already the owner and binds an elite. *Divisibility* declares a collective holding partible and manufactures a market. This case runs a fourth, and its distinguishing feature is that it makes no claim about title at all.

Under *default*, the incumbent's right to his country is never questioned. What is asserted is that he owes, that the amount is what the suzerain says it is, and that he has not paid. The estate then passes in satisfaction of the debt. Its job is **annexation without a casus belli**: it converts an act of conquest into an act of distraint, and it does so inside a frame the victim himself accepts, since he acknowledged the tributary relation years earlier when the sum was small and the alternative was a campaign. Its precondition is a prior suzerain-vassal relation, which is why it appears in an Indian successor state and not in the colonial cases — a European power arriving from the sea has no tributary relation to ratchet and must reach for vacancy or recognition instead.

Its tell is a sequence, and the sequence is what identifies it in a record: a tribute fixed at a payable figure, one or more increases at intervals of a few years, a refusal or a failure, and an annexation dated within months of the failure. Where that four-step shape repeats across chiefs with nothing else in common — a Baloch zamindar at Sahiwal, a Sial at Jhang, a Rajput in Kullu, an Afghan governor at Multan — it is not a series of coincidences. It is one instrument being operated.

The prediction confirmed: the consideration was armed service, it was not deleted, and the bill was presented by the men who kept their retinues. The framework holds that the operative variable in any co-optation is not the grant but what was demanded in return; that a grant buying armed service leaves a rival with a retinue and installs a civil-war risk in the same clause; and that where a settlement leaves its grantees armed, the medieval failure mode should be expected. This case is an unusually clean test, because the same ruler ran both forms at once and the record distinguishes them explicitly. The subsistence jagir carried no obligation and no men — a pension for a disarmed rival. The service jagir carried a stated contingent — a hundred horse at Kasur, sixty at Nurpur, fifty at Sahiwal, thirty at Pindi Bhattian, four hundred to the Dogras of Jammu — and the Sikh sardars held their estates, in the revenue administration's own words, on condition of furnishing horsemen in time of war.

The shape to carry into the later modules and test rather than assume is this: **where a consolidator strips the retinues of the elite that shares his founding and grants retinues to an elite that does not, the succession is the moment the second group collects.** The disarmed insiders cannot defend the arrangement even where their formation would incline them to; the armed outsiders are not formed to defend it and are equipped not to. That the Dogra house rose exactly along the second track is established here from the grants. Whether it is what destroyed the kingdom is a claim the historiography makes and this study will have to verify from the events themselves.

The correction: not every conquest performs the conversion, and the level at which it is performed is the level at which the conqueror is a stranger. This study expected the misl settlement to show the framework's characteristic technology — office into estate, patrimony into partible share, occupation into vacancy — and it shows none of it. The misls inserted a revenue claimant above the village and left the village untouched: the same lineage shares, the same undivided common, the same council, the same block on sale to outsiders. They did not need to convert anything, because they were not strangers to the tenure; their rule for dividing a conquest was the rule their own kinsmen used to divide a field, and they applied it upward rather than importing one downward.

Ranjit Singh, by contrast, performed a conversion of great violence — and he performed it on *sovereignties*, not on fields. He turned a hundred and twenty-five ruling houses into holders of assignments, and left the tenure beneath them as undisturbed as the misls had. The general form worth testing: **a conqueror converts at the level at which he is a stranger and not below it.** A foreign power arriving over a village order it does not understand converts land; a domestic consolidator rising through an order he was raised inside converts jurisdiction. Reading a settlement, therefore, ask first where the conqueror came from, because that predicts which layer his instruments will cut through and which they will leave standing.

And a note on the Qazi, since this study set out to test him. *A share to every man, young and old* is neither a hostile chronicler's flourish nor a general description of the Punjab. It is an accurate report of the upper doabs in the winter of 1764, stretched by a traveller across a province he did not cross, describing a distribution that really did run down to the individual horseman inside a body that was a small minority of the people living on the land.

A note on sources. The extended primary quotations are from public-domain texts. John Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs* (1812), is quoted verbatim on the chief's half-share and the indulgence shown the cultivator, and is paraphrased on the condition of the Muslim population; both passages are on the same pages and both are reported. Lepel

Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs* (Lahore, 1865), is quoted verbatim on Khuda Yar Khan Tiwana finding himself a person of very small importance at Lahore; Griffin compiled the work from the families' own papers for the colonial government, which makes it rich in exactly the detail this module needs and also a document produced by the power that had just annexed the country. The clause that the Sikh sardars between the Beas and the Sutlej held their estates on condition of furnishing horsemen in time of war is quoted from the Punjab land-administration literature descended from the British settlement reports of the 1850s, and is that administration's summary rather than the text of any single grant; the underlying *sanads* have not been examined for this study and should be, because the exact wording of one such grant would be worth more than the summary.

Quoted in fragment from copyrighted translations, and flagged. Qazi Nur Muhammad's *Jangnama* of 1765 survives in Persian and is quoted here only in short fragment from Ganda Singh's English translation, published at Amritsar in 1939 and still in copyright; the substance is paraphrased and the reader should go to that edition. The Maharaja's terms to Jafar Khan of Khushab in 1810 are paraphrased, not quoted, from Sohan Lal Suri's *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, in the modern Guru Nanak Dev University translation, likewise in copyright; the *Umdat* is a commissioned court chronicle written by the Maharaja's own record-keeper and should be read as such — it is invaluable for dates, terms and figures and is not a neutral witness to motive.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. The count of political units in the late-eighteenth-century Punjab — fifty-six Sikh principalities in the upper doabs, some thirty-two non-Sikh in the plains of which thirty were Muslim, and near forty in the hills, for a total around a hundred and twenty-five — is Veena Sachdeva's, in *Polity and Economy of the Punjab during the Late Eighteenth Century* (1993), building on Indu Banga's demolition of the twelve-misl scheme in *Agrarian System of the Sikhs* (1978). The distinction between the service jagir carrying a stated contingent and the subsistence jagir carrying no obligation, the suzerain-vassal ladder and its conditions, and the finding that the tribute was raised until non-payment made annexation appear called for, follow Banga and the doctoral literature built on her and on the Khalsa Darbar Records in the Punjab State Archives — in particular Gurpreet Kaur's *Maharaja Ranjit Singh and His Non-Sikh Subjects* (Panjab University, 2019), from which the individual cases and figures in this module are taken at second hand and against which they should be checked. The finding that the Sikhs formed the dominant element in the ruling class, took the largest share of jagirs and a much larger share of revenue-free grants without that share coming at others' expense, is J. S. Grewal's in *The Sikhs of the Punjab*. James Browne's report of moderate collection,

payment in kind and the preservation of hereditary tenures is from his *India Tracts* of 1788 and is reported here at second hand rather than collated with the printed text.

Figures, and their status. The individual tribute demands, jagir valuations and horsemen quotas given above — Sahiwal at twelve thousand and then eighty-five thousand rupees, Jhang at sixty thousand and then a lakh, Kullu at forty and then fifty thousand, Multan at seventy thousand and then two lakhs, Nurpur's jagir at ten thousand with sixty horse, Sahiwal's at fourteen thousand four hundred with fifty, Langar Khan's cash of eleven thousand two hundred and thirty-six for himself, two sons and forty-two troopers, Kashmir's Zabar Khan at twenty-five thousand, Pakpattan's *pirzada* at about thirteen thousand, the Dogra grant of five territories for four hundred horsemen — derive from the Khalsa Darbar Records, Griffin, Sohan Lal Suri and the *Punjab Hill States* of Hutchison and Vogel, as compiled in the modern scholarship. They are the state's own figures where they come from the assignment records and the chroniclers' where they do not, and no attempt has been made here to distinguish nominal from realised value; a jagir "worth" ten thousand rupees was worth what its holder could collect. The rakhi rate of an eighth to a half, usually a fifth, and the alternative division reported as roughly fifty-five per cent to the cultivator, thirty-seven and a half to the government and seven and a half to the proprietor, come from the standard reference literature descended from Ganda Singh and Hari Ram Gupta, and are conventions rather than measured averages. The claim that the Dogra ascendancy was the principal agency of the kingdom's collapse is the historiography's and is registered here as such, not adopted.

MODULE 3

Struck on Both Worlds

The Robe — a coinage that named no king across eighty-four years, an authority seated forty miles from the capital in men who were not the ruler's officers, and the question of whom a claim made in the Guru's name was actually addressed to.

What the silver says

Start with the hardest evidence any order leaves, because in this case it happens also to be the strangest.

Between 1765 and 1849 the Sikh mints of the Punjab struck several million rupees, and on not one regular rupee or gold mohur of the Sikh Empire does the name or the portrait of the ruler appear. Not Ranjit Singh's, across forty years of reign; not Kharak Singh's, not Nau Nihal Singh's, not Sher Singh's, not Dalip Singh's. Five maharajas, fourteen mints, half a century of sovereign coinage, and the metal is anonymous.

What it carries instead are two Persian couplets. The one the money-changers called Nanakshahi is the standard legend of Lahore and Amritsar and of most of the empire's mints:

> *Sikka zad bar har do alam, tegh-i-Nanak wahib ast Fath Guru Gobind Singh Shah-i-Shahan, fazl Saccha Sahib ast*
> *The coin is struck upon both worlds by the sword of Nanak, the bestower; victory is Guru Gobind Singh, King of Kings — by the grace of the True Lord.*

The second, called Gobindshahi, appears on the coins of Kashmir, Peshawar, the Derajat, Mankera and on special issues from Amritsar:

> *Deg o tegh o fateh o nusrat be-dirang Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh*
> *The cauldron, the sword, victory and swift assistance are the gift of Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh.*

The reverse gives the mint and nothing more: *Zarb Dar-ul-Sultanate Lahore*, struck at Lahore the seat of sovereignty; *Zarb Sri Amritsar jiyo*, struck at revered Amritsar.

The one personal contribution Ranjit Singh made to the coinage of his own empire was a small leaf, introduced on the Lahore rupees from the year of his conquest and on the Amritsar issues shortly after, marking the resumed uniform Khalsa coinage. His four successors inherited the leaf without altering it. There survive a small number of

pattern pieces which suggest that at some point he considered a pictorial issue depicting the ruler as a disciple of Guru Nanak — still unnamed, still not a portrait of a king. Even that was abandoned.

Set beside what every neighbour was doing, the abstention is conspicuous. The Mughal rupee carried the emperor's name. The East India Company struck in the name of Shah Alam. The Durrani rupee carried Ahmad Shah's couplet. And — this is the comparison that matters most, and it is the closest thing to a controlled experiment this study will find — the Sikh states south of the Sutlej struck Ahmad Shah Durrani's couplet on their principal coinage for more than a century, from the 1760s into the twentieth century, at a mint they styled *Sahrind*. Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Kaithal were ruled by Sikh Jats who had taken *pahul* from Nawab Kapur Singh and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and who endowed gurdwaras. Their rupees announced the sovereignty of the Afghan king whose army had killed Sikhs in thousands, and announced it in the name of the town where the tenth Guru's two younger sons had been put to death.

Same religion, same century, same currency zone, forty miles apart across a river — and two opposite answers to the question of whose name goes on the metal. Which establishes, before any argument, that the anonymity of the Lahore coinage was a decision.

What the claim was

The claim is stated in the couplet and it is unusually explicit: authority in both the temporal and the spiritual world derives from Nanak and from Gobind Singh, and the coin is struck by their sword rather than anybody else's.

The rest of the vocabulary of the state runs the same way. Ranjit Singh's government was called the *Sarkar Khalsa* and his court the *Durbar Khalsa* — the government and court of the Khalsa, not of a man or a house. He was proclaimed Maharaja on 12 April 1801, chosen deliberately for Baisakhi, and the mark was placed on his forehead not by a priest of any court but by Sahib Singh Bedi, a lineal descendant of Guru Nanak. He was given no crown and, by the consistent report of both his own chroniclers and European visitors, never used a throne; he sat where he sat and his turban served.

The administrative machinery carried the same formula down to the level of a warrant. Every order the Maharaja gave — spoken in Punjabi, transcribed into Persian by a *munshi* — was sealed twice before it could move money: once in Gurmukhi with *Akal Sahai Ranjit Singh*, the Timeless One is the help of Ranjit Singh, and once in Persian with *Mulahiza shud*, it has been examined. The name of the ruler appears in the state's paperwork, and it appears there in the grammatical position of a man being helped.

There is a story, reported by a modern historian from the tradition rather than from any contemporary document, that when his minister Dhian Singh once remonstrated with him for dressing like a servant, the Maharaja asked in whose name the coins were struck; Dhian Singh answered Guru Nanak; and the Maharaja said that the man in whose name the coins ran was the ruler and that he himself was that man's servant. The anecdote should be treated as an anecdote. But it is a correct paraphrase of what the metal in fact said, which is why it has lasted.

The anchor that cannot be inherited

Underneath the coin is a doctrinal arrangement which the framework has to register carefully, because it does not resemble the anchors this collection has examined elsewhere.

The tenth Guru died in 1708 without appointing a human successor. What the tradition holds, and what the practice of the eighteenth century unmistakably confirms whatever the exact origin, is that authority passed to two things: to the scripture, addressed and treated as the living Guru, and to the assembled body of the initiated, the Guru Panth. Both formulations are in use from within a generation. Neither is a person.

Three consequences follow, and they organise everything else in this module.

The first is that nobody can become the anchor. There is no office to seize, no bloodline to marry into, no ordination to obtain. A man may serve the Khalsa, command its armies, take its revenue and be called Maharaja, and at the end of all of it he is still standing outside the thing in whose name he acts. Ranjit Singh's anonymity on the coin was not modesty and it was not only piety. It was an accurate statement of the only position available to him.

The second is that the anchor is immune to the conduct of whoever is currently in charge. A dynastic legitimation is damaged by a bad king; a legitimation resting on a text is not, because the text made no claim about him. This is a substantial and underrated asset and the case demonstrates it directly: across forty years the Maharaja drank heavily, kept Muslim women, and was on at least one reported occasion arraigned before the Sikh community for it, and none of it touched the standing of the Sarkar Khalsa by so much as a rupee's discount.

The third consequence is the difficulty, and it is structural. A text cannot adjudicate. Somebody has to read it, and somebody has to say what the reading requires. That somebody has to sit somewhere.

The seat that was not the capital

Where they sat was Amritsar, and the ruler sat at Lahore.

The framework's usual expectation is that a ruler and the seat of his legitimation converge — that he appoints to it, endows it, sits in it, or in the last resort collapses it into his own person. Here he could do none of those things, because the seat was not an office in his gift. The Akal Takht faced the Harmandir at Amritsar; the men who controlled its proceedings were the Akalis, the order of Sikh devotees in blue with the steel bangles, who lived at the shrine, initiated converts and administered its ceremonies.

Malcolm, who was in the Punjab in 1805 and published in 1812, described what they could do to a chief, and his account is the hardest contemporary evidence available for how much the robe actually weighed. They subsisted, he wrote, on a charity which they generally extorted

> *by accusing the principal chiefs of crimes, imposing fines upon them; and, in the event of their refusing to pay, preventing them from performing their ablutions, or going through any of their religious ceremonies at Amritsar.*

And he saw what made this more than a nuisance:

> *...a chief, who is become unpopular with the Acálís, must not only avoid Amritsar, but is likely to have his dependants taught, when they pay their devotions at that place, that it is pious to resist his authority.*

That is the mechanism in one sentence, and it is the sharpest thing anyone wrote about the Sikh order in the period. The men at the seat could not raise an army against a chief. They could do something more troubling: they could address the chief's own followers, in the one place all of them came to, and tell them that disobedience was piety. Every horseman in the Punjab went to Amritsar at the festivals. The robe was not decoration on a throne; it was a channel that ran from the shrine straight past the ruler into the ranks.

Malcolm also saw, with the coldness that makes him valuable, why the Akalis defended the arrangement so fiercely. They had, he wrote,

> *a great interest in maintaining both the religion and government of the Sikhs, as established by Gúrú Góvind; as, on its continuance in that shape, their religious and political influence must depend.*

Which is the standing condition of everyone who holds a seat: their position is the position of the thing they guard, and they will guard it accordingly.

The famous test, and what it will and will not bear

The story every account tells at this point is the one about Akali Phula Singh and the Maharaja, and it needs handling with more care than it usually gets.

In the telling, Ranjit Singh married Moran, a Muslim dancer of Lahore. Phula Singh, the Nihang leader who held the Akal Takht, declared him *tankhaiya* — a Sikh under religious censure — and issued a summons. The Maharaja came to Amritsar, appeared before the congregation, admitted the fault, and was sentenced to be flogged. He removed his shirt and presented himself. Phula Singh then asked the assembled congregation whether they would forgive him, and they did.

Everything about that story is repeated confidently and almost nothing about it is stable. The date is given as 1802 in some accounts and 1806 in others, and Phula Singh appears to have become custodian of the Akal Takht only around 1807. The sentence is given as fifty lashes, or as fifty commuted to six which were actually administered, or as a pardon before any blow fell. The standard modern reference works hedge the whole episode with "supposedly." It has every feature this collection has learned to distrust: a founding scene of exactly the shape a later community would most want, surviving in versions that improve.

So the study will not rest anything on the flogging. What it will rest something on is two things the episode cannot manufacture.

The first is that the story is the story — that for two centuries the illustration reached for, when Sikhs wanted to say what their order was, has been a ruler stripped to the waist in front of a congregation. That is evidence about the claim, whatever it is worth as evidence about the event.

The second is that Malcolm wrote his account in 1805 and published it in 1812, before the story could have hardened, and Malcolm was not describing a legend. He was describing a going concern in which chiefs paid fines to men at a shrine in order to be permitted to bathe, and in which the alternative to paying was having one's own retainers instructed that resistance was pious. Whether or not a whip was ever raised at Amritsar, the arrangement Malcolm describes would produce a story like the one that is told, and a state in which no such arrangement existed would not.

One further fact about Phula Singh keeps the picture from being sentimental. He commanded Nihang contingents reported at up to three thousand men in the Maharaja's campaigns; his Akalis found the breach at Multan in 1818; he served in Kashmir in 1819; and he died in 1823 leading a charge against the Afghans at

Nowshera. The guardian of the seat that could summon the ruler was also a general in the ruler's army, paid and directed by him. Both facts are true at once, and the arrangement they describe is not a balance of powers. It is an unresolved question about which nobody had to decide while the Maharaja lived.

Whom the robe was addressed to

Now the question the framework insists on, and here the answer is uncomfortable in a specific way.

The robe was cut for the Khalsa. Every element of it addresses one community: a coin invoking two Gurus, a state named for the initiated body, a proclamation timed to Baisakhi and performed by a descendant of Nanak, a sacred centre at Amritsar, a salutation and a war cry in Punjabi and Gurmukhi that mean nothing to anybody outside. And the Khalsa was, on the best modern estimates, somewhere in the region of a tenth of the population of the country it ruled, in a province with a Muslim majority.

So the claim ran to a small minority. What ran the state was something much wider, and the mismatch is not a scandal but it is the thing this module was looking for.

The Maharaja's principal diplomat was Fakir Azizuddin, a Muslim, who negotiated on behalf of a government whose currency proclaimed the sovereignty of Guru Nanak. Multan was governed for close to a quarter of a century by Diwan Sawan Mal, a Hindu, and governed well enough that the record is unusually kind to him. Peshawar was held by an Italian. The treasury and the twelve record offices of the central secretariat were built and run by Brahmin and Khatri families whose experience came from Mughal and Kabul service, and by the end of the reign the single most indispensable man in Lahore was Diwan Dina Nath, who understood the accounts — so indispensable that the British kept him on after the annexation for the same reason. The regular battalions received their commands in French.

None of those men appears anywhere in the robe. The coin does not address them, the state's name does not include them, the sacred centre is not theirs, and the ceremony that made the ruler a ruler was performed by a descendant of a Guru they did not follow. They were paid, promoted, trusted with treasuries and provinces and frontier commands, and they were structurally outside the account the order gave of itself.

That is the gap. It is not a gap between what was said in public and what was done in private — the Lahore state was not concealing anything, and the multi-religious character of its service is documented in its own records. It is a gap between whom the claim was addressed to and whom the machine ran on. The robe was cut for a tenth of the population and the government was staffed from the whole of it, and nobody at the

time appears to have found this a problem, because nobody was asking the other nine-tenths to believe anything. They were being asked to pay revenue and keep quiet, and that is a demand a robe is not needed for.

Which supplies the module's plainest finding about who the robe was for. It was not for the ruled. It was for the men with weapons — the *ghorchara* who had come out of the misls, and later the battalions — whose grandfathers had been hunted for their beards and who understood a coin invoking Nanak's sword as a statement about themselves. Those men had to be held by something other than pay, because for most of the eighteenth century there had been no pay. The robe was the thing that had held them then, and it was cheaper to keep wearing it than to invent a substitute.

What it cost

The trade is worth stating exactly, because both sides of it are real.

What the anonymity bought was considerable. It bought the adherence of a body that had spent fifty years refusing to have a king and killing people who tried to become one. It denied every rival Sikh chief the only argument that could have unseated Ranjit Singh, since none of them could claim to be the Guru either — a Bhangi could contest a Sukerchakia's power but not his title, because neither had one. And it made the legitimation indestructible by scandal, which for this particular ruler was not a small consideration.

What it cost was the succession.

A dynastic robe hands a son something. It says that authority resides in a house, and the house continues. An impersonal robe hands a son nothing, because it never had anything to say about his father. When Ranjit Singh died on 27 June 1839, what passed to Kharak Singh was an army, a treasury, a secretariat and a chair that was not a throne. The thing in whose name it all ran stayed where it had always been, at Amritsar, in the keeping of men who were not his.

And the coinage proves the point better than any argument could. Between June 1839 and September 1843, four men held the Lahore *masnad*. Kharak Singh died in November 1840 under disputed circumstances. His son Nau Nihal Singh was killed the same day by a collapsing archway on the way back from his father's cremation. Sher Singh was murdered at a durbar in September 1843 along with the wazir Dhian Singh. Dalip Singh acceded at the age of five.

Through all of it the mints at Lahore and Amritsar went on striking the same two couplets, with the same leaf, unchanged. Four maharajas were made and unmade in four years without a single alteration to the metal — because the metal had never been about any of them.

That is the impersonal anchor doing exactly what it does. It survived the founder completely. It also did precisely nothing to determine who should follow him, and in the space where a dynastic claim would have stood, the decision fell to whoever held the machine.

Reading the robe against the framework

Two contributions and one correction to this collection's working assumptions.

The impersonal anchor, and the trade it makes. The collection has generally treated a robe as an account of why *this* ruler or *this* house should rule — a claim whose subject is the person in charge. This case runs a robe that explicitly declines to say anything about him. Its subject is a scripture and a corporate body, and its instrument of publication is a coinage that names nobody for eighty-four years.

The type is worth adding, with its terms of trade stated:

An anchor located in a text and a corporate body rather than in a person is unusually robust to the ruler's conduct and unusually barren at the succession. It is robust because it makes no claim that misconduct can falsify: a drunk, a heretic or a man arraigned before a congregation can wear it without damaging it, since it was never his. It is barren because a legitimation that never attached to the predecessor cannot be transmitted to the successor. Where the collection finds such an anchor, it should expect two things — that the order will absorb personal scandal that would break a dynastic order, and that at the death of a strong ruler the question of succession will be settled by whoever controls the apparatus, because the robe abstains from the question by construction. Four maharajas in four years, an unaltered coinage, and an army that held the robe directly rather than through its officers, is what that abstention looks like on the ground.

There is a corollary the later modules will have to test. An impersonal anchor is not merely neutral at a succession; it is available to anyone inside the body. The Khalsa's own soldiers had exactly as good a claim to be acting in the Guru's name as the Maharaja's heirs did, and the coin agreed with them.

The seat that cannot be captured by appointment. The framework holds that an anchor needs a seat and that the ruler will want to hold it. This case supplies the variant where he cannot, and shows what he does instead.

Where the anchor is a person or an office, the seat is filled by appointment and a ruler takes it by appointing. Where the anchor is a *text*, the seat is a place of reading rather than a place of appointment, and no warrant can transfer it. **A ruler facing such a seat can only buy it or employ its holders — and the standing risk he accepts is that the men at the seat retain a channel to his own followers that runs past him**

entirely. Ranjit Singh did both things available to him: he lavished endowment on the Amritsar shrine, and he put the Akalis' most formidable leader on the payroll with three thousand men and sent him against Multan, Kashmir and the Afghans. Malcolm, in 1805, had already identified the risk the arrangement left open — that a chief out of favour at Amritsar would find his own dependants taught that resisting him was pious. That the risk never materialised against Ranjit Singh is a fact about Ranjit Singh, not about the structure.

The correction: a coinage is a robe-instrument by what it omits as much as by what it carries — and this case supplies a natural experiment proving the omission was chosen. This study came in reading coins the ordinary way, as a place where a ruler puts his name. The Lahore rupee carries no name at all, and it would be easy to file that under convention or piety and move on. The Phulkian coinage forbids that reading. The same people, in the same generation, holding the same faith and the same initiation, struck the couplet of Ahmad Shah Durrani on their principal currency for over a century — including after 1809, when they were under British protection and the Afghan king was three decades dead — and struck it at a mint they named for Sarhind.

Two Sikh polities, one currency zone, a river between them, opposite answers. And the reason for the difference is visible in the geography of each one's dependence: the Phulkian chiefs lay on the open road between Delhi and Lahore with no river to shelter behind, and needed Delhi and Kabul to accept them; Ranjit Singh lay north of the Sutlej with an army recruited from the Majha, and needed the Khalsa to accept him. **The legend on a coin is a decision about whose belief the order actually requires**, and where two branches of the same community strike different legends in the same decade, the difference tells you which audience each of them could not do without.

A note on sources. The extended primary quotations are from John Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs* (London, 1812), a public-domain text, quoted verbatim on the Akalis' practice of fining chiefs and barring their ablutions, on the danger to a chief unpopular at Amritsar, and on the Akalis' own interest in maintaining the Sikh religion and government in the form Guru Gobind Singh established. Malcolm was in the Punjab with Lord Lake's army in 1805; his account of the Akalis is the earliest sustained European description of them and is written by a professional soldier assessing a foreign power his own government might have to fight.

The numismatic evidence, and its status. The transliterations of the Nanakshahi and Gobindshahi couplets, the reverse legends of the Lahore and Amritsar mints, the fact of the anonymous coinage across all five reigns, the leaf mark introduced from VS 1856, the existence of abandoned pattern pieces showing the ruler as a disciple of

Nanak, and the Durrani couplet struck by the Phulkian states, are taken from a specialist numismatic compilation drawing on Hans Herrli, *The Coins of the Sikhs* (2nd ed., 2004), Paramdip Kaur Khera's *Catalogue of Sikh Coins in the British Museum* (2011), and the Spink catalogue of 2022. No coins have been examined for this study and the Persian has not been read from the metal; the transliterations are therefore reported at one remove and should be checked against Herrli or the British Museum catalogue before being quoted further. The underlying legends are eighteenth- and nineteenth-century struck coin and are not in copyright. Where the sources differ in transliteration — *Deg Tegh Fateh* against *Deg o Tegh o Fateh o Nusrat*, *Fath* against *Fateh* — the variants are those of the compilers rather than of the coins, several die varieties of each legend being recorded.

Reported from the tradition, and flagged as such. The exchange in which the Maharaja asks Dhian Singh in whose name the coins are struck is reported by the modern historian Bhagat Singh from the tradition and is not attested in any contemporary document consulted here; it is quoted as an anecdote that correctly paraphrases the coinage. The episode of Akali Phula Singh, the Maharaja and Moran is given in the module as the tradition gives it, together with the reasons for treating it cautiously: the date varies between 1802 and 1806 across accounts, Phula Singh appears to have taken charge of the Akal Takht only around 1807, the sentence is variously fifty lashes, fifty commuted to six, or a pardon before any blow, and the standard reference works hedge it. Nothing in the argument depends on its having happened. The double-sealing of pay orders with *Akal Sahai Ranjit Singh* in Gurmukhi and *Mulahiza shud* in Persian, and the structure of the twelve *daftars* and the three-key treasury, are reported from the doctoral literature on the Lahore secretariat working from the Khalsa Darbar Records, at second hand.

Contested and approximate. The Sikh share of the population is given here as somewhere in the region of a tenth, on the modern estimates set out in this study's opening, against a much larger traditional figure; the point at issue — that the community addressed by the robe was a small minority of the country ruled — holds across the whole plausible range. The size of Akali Phula Singh's contingent, given at up to three thousand, is a reference-literature figure. The estimate of roughly a million rupees a year from the Amritsar mint is Herrli's, reported by Khera.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For the doctrines of Guru Granth and Guru Panth and their attestation from within a generation of 1708, and for the general character of the Sikh polity's self-description, J. S. Grewal's *The Sikhs of the Punjab*. For the composition of the ruling class and the place of Muslims and Hindus in the civil and military administration, Indu Banga and the doctoral literature

built on the Khalsa Darbar Records. For the character of the Akal Takht and the office of its custodian, the standard Sikh reference works, which are written from inside the tradition and are used here for description rather than for adjudication.

MODULE 4

No Child Takes the Sword

Formation — who held a Punjabi child before he could weigh anything, why an order whose initiation required a grown man could not reproduce itself, and what a state that paid for every formation and designed none had left when the floor was finally tested.

The question this module is actually asking

The framework's account of formation is not an account of propaganda, and this study has to say so at the outset because the mistake is easy and it wrecks the analysis.

Formation is what happens to a person before the machinery that would screen it has finished growing. It is the installation, in a child, of the picture of the world he will later reason *from* rather than *about*: which beings exist, what time it is and what the year is called, which day is different from the others, what happened at the beginning, who his people are, and — the load-bearing item — who counts as somebody who knows. That last is the whole of it. No human being verifies more than a sliver of what he believes; the rest he takes from others, and formation is the process that decides *which* others. A grown man's vigilance is real, and it is very hard to argue him out of anything. But his vigilance reads cues, and which cues it credits was settled in him by people he could not assess at the time he was assessing nothing.

Two consequences follow and they organise this module.

The first is that formation is the cheapest thing a ruler can own and the most expensive thing to build. Own it and the population arrives each generation already holding the account of the world in which your rule is the ordinary shape of things, and the floor of force can be thin. Fail to own it and you pay in soldiers for what belief would have supplied free.

The second is the one the collection has learned to watch for, and it is the reason this module exists. **There is no unformed person.** To be unformed is to be feral, and feral children are not produced in villages. So a ruler does not face a choice between forming a population and leaving it blank; he faces a choice between forming it and letting whoever is already forming it carry on. Where a conquering power declines the job — as European colonial administrations characteristically did, because forming the conquered as members of the ruling nation would have meant admitting them to it — the incumbent formation does not lapse. It holds the field, uninterrupted, and goes on

producing generation after generation of people whose account of who is trustworthy was assembled by somebody other than the government.

The Punjab under Sikh rule is a case where the ruler was not a foreign power and did not withhold anything. He paid for everybody's formation and designed none of it. This module is about what that turns out to cost.

Who held a Punjabi child in 1830

Begin with the ground truth, which happens to have been surveyed — late, by the wrong government, for its own purposes, but surveyed.

In 1882 Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner, an orientalist and the first principal of the Government College at Lahore, published a report on indigenous education in the Punjab commissioned in the aftermath of the Hunter Commission. He was investigating what the British had done to Punjabi education since annexation, and his conclusion was that they had wrecked it. He is therefore a hostile witness against his own government and a friendly one to the order it displaced, and both facts have to be held while reading him.

What he found, and what is not in dispute even where his figures are, is the shape of the thing. Formation in the Punjab was denominational, and it was everywhere. He classified the schools he located into categories that read, on their own, as a map of the province's mind: Qur'an schools; Persian schools; Persian-and-Qur'an schools; Arabic schools and *madrasas*; Gurmukhi schools; Hindi and Nagri schools; Sanskrit *pathshalas*; and the *lande* and *mahajani* schools where the trading castes learned their own commercial scripts. A mosque had a *maktab* attached. A temple had a *pathshala*. A *dharamsala* or gurdwara had a Gurmukhi school. The teacher was a *maulvi*, a *pandit*, a *bhai*, or a *pandha*, and he was maintained by fees, by grain at harvest, by rent-free land, or by some combination.

Leitner's own figures — he put the number of pupils under the Lahore Darbar at something over three hundred thousand against about a hundred and ninety thousand in 1883 — should be treated with real caution. He was arguing a case, the pre-annexation figure is a reconstruction rather than a count, and no census of Sikh-period schooling exists. What survives the caution is the structure, which is corroborated from every other direction: the Punjab of the Sikh period had a dense, functioning, community-by-community apparatus for holding children, and it was not the state's.

Now put a specific child in it.

A Muslim boy in a village of the Rechna Doab in 1830 went to the *maktab* attached to his mosque. He learned the Arabic alphabet and recited the Qur'an, probably before he understood it. He learned the five prayers and the direction to face. He learned that

the year was numbered from the Hijra, that Friday was different, that Ramadan came and went by a lunar reckoning nobody else in the province used, and that the men to be trusted about anything ultimate were the *maulvi* who taught him and the *pir* at the shrine his family had attached itself to, whose ancestors had been attaching families for six hundred years. Somewhere in that formation there was a ruler at Lahore who took the revenue. There was nothing whatever about the Guru Nanak whose name was on the coin his father paid it in.

A Hindu boy learned Nagri or Sanskrit from a *pandit* at the temple, or *lande* from a *pandha* if his caste was a trading one, and received the festival year, the caste order, the *purohit* as the authority on birth, marriage and death, and the Vikram Samvat era for counting.

A Sikh boy went to the Gurmukhi school at his village *dharamsala*. He learned the script the scripture was written in — which was, and this matters, a script used for almost nothing else — and the *janamsakhi* stories of Nanak, and the daily prayers, and that the year turned at Baisakhi, and that at Amritsar there was a pool and a book.

Three formations, three calendars, three sets of trusted men, running in parallel in the same villages. That was the field. The question is what the Sikh state did to it.

What the state did: it paid

The answer is that it subsidised all three and built none.

The instrument was the *dharmarth* grant — revenue-free land or a cash assignment made to a religious institution or an individual holy man, of a kind the Mughals had made before under the name *madad-i-ma'ash* and which the Sikh chiefs and then Ranjit Singh continued on a large scale. The grants went to Sikh shrines and *dharamsalas*, to Hindu temples, *thakurdwaras*, Vaishnava and Shaiva establishments and the Jogi seat at Jakhbar, and to Muslim shrines, mosques and *pirs*. The modern scholarship's finding is that the Sikhs received a considerably larger share of revenue-free grants than Hindus or Muslims, and that the Hindus and Muslims nonetheless received a great deal and did not receive less than they had before.

Read that as a formation policy rather than as a piety policy and it becomes remarkable. The Lahore state was paying, out of the revenue of a Muslim-majority province, to keep in operation the apparatus that formed Muslim children into Muslims, Hindu children into Hindus, and Sikh children into Sikhs — and it was not designing, staffing or inspecting any of it. There was no state school. There was no state curriculum. There was no state language of instruction; the court ran in Persian, which is to say in the administrative language of the empire the Khalsa had overthrown, and which was taught in the Persian schools of the *maulvis*.

This is not the colonial pattern and should not be confused with it. Nothing was withheld. A Muslim in the Sikh Punjab was not denied a formation because forming him would have meant admitting him; his formation was funded. But the *effect* on the state was identical to the colonial case, and identical for the reason the framework gives: the incumbent formation held the field, because it was never displaced, and the state that paid for it acquired no place in it.

The consequence can be stated as a single sentence about a single child. In 1830 a Muslim boy in the Punjab learned who was worth believing from a teacher on a Lahore Darbar grant, and the list did not include anybody at Lahore.

The thing the Khalsa could not do to a child

Now the structural fact that governs the whole module, and it is a fact about the Khalsa itself rather than about its policy.

The distinctive formation of the Khalsa was an initiation. A person presented himself, took *amrit* prepared with a double-edged sword, received a name, accepted a code of conduct enforceable by the community, and thereafter carried marks that made him identifiable at a hundred paces. Everything about that transaction requires a person old enough to undertake obligations knowingly. It is a decision, made at cost, in front of witnesses, by someone who could have declined.

That is an extraordinarily powerful thing to do to an adult, and the record proves it at the highest possible standard of evidence. When a hundred of Banda's men a day went to the block at Delhi in March 1716, the East India Company's envoys reported to Fort William that not one of them recanted — and that in a situation where recanting was on offer and would have been accepted. That is what an initiation taken at cost produces: a commitment placed beyond calculation, made credible by the very expense of holding it, in men who chose it as men.

But it is not formation in the sense this module is about, and the difference is not a quibble. **An initiation cannot be administered to a child, because a child cannot choose and cannot be at cost.** Whatever the Khalsa did to the men who took *pahul*, it did to people who arrived already carrying a completed account of the world assembled by somebody else — by a village, a *pandha*, a lineage, a mother, a festival year. The Khalsa layer went on top of that. It went on very deep and it held under torture. It did not replace what was underneath, and it could not, because it arrived twenty years late.

So the Khalsa's own members were, in the ordinary formational sense, formed by the Punjabi village and its Hindu-inflected practice, and then re-formed as adults. Which is precisely why the Sikh order of this period is so hard to disentangle from its surroundings on questions of caste, marriage, ritual and idol-worship — not because

anybody was insincere, but because the initiation operated on a substrate it had not laid and did not remove.

And there was a Sikh childhood formation. That is what the Gurmukhi schools at the *dharamsalas* were. But here the case delivers its hardest single finding, and it is the reverse of what this study expected.

Who was forming the Sikh children

The Sikh shrines and *dharamsalas* of the Punjab — including the great historic gurdwaras — were in the hands of hereditary custodians, *mahants*, and the *mahants* were overwhelmingly Udasi and Nirmala. Both are ascetic orders that revere Guru Nanak. Neither takes the Khalsa initiation. Both are, in the description the modern scholarship uses without much dissent, Brahmanically inflected: they kept images, performed rituals the Khalsa code forbids, observed caste distinctions in the distribution of *karah prasad*, and shaded at the edges into the general devotional Hinduism of northern India.

They held the shrines because of the eighteenth century. When the Khalsa was being hunted out of the villages between 1716 and 1745, a body of men with unshorn hair and steel about them could not sit at a shrine and keep it; men without those marks could, because they were not identifiable and the government did not want them. So the custodianship of the Sikh sacred places passed to Sikhs who were not Khalsa, and stayed there.

And Ranjit Singh's *dharmarth* grants went to them. The Udasi establishments received revenue-free grants from the Maharaja and his successors on a substantial scale, and those grants partially survived into British times.

Set the two halves together and the sentence is this: **the Khalsa state paid hereditary non-Khalsa priests to form Khalsa children.** The state whose coin proclaimed the sovereignty of Guru Gobind Singh, whose army fought under his likeness, whose name was the Sarkar Khalsa, did not control the institutions that held its own community's five-year-olds. It endowed them and left them to the men who had them.

Nothing about that was a decision to neglect formation. It was the ordinary practice of an Indian state towards religious establishments, and it looked like generosity, and in a sense it was. But its result was that at no point between 1799 and 1849 did the Sarkar Khalsa hold the formation of the Sikhs, let alone of anybody else.

What was formed instead: clerks and soldiers

Two exceptions are worth stating, because they show the mechanism working when somebody actually operated it.

The first is the administrative class, and it is not an exception in the state's favour. The twelve *daftars* of the Lahore secretariat, the treasury, the accounts, the correspondence — all of it ran in Persian and all of it was staffed from Brahmin and Khatri families whose training came out of Mughal and Kabul service. Bhawani Das arrived from Kabul in 1808 and built the treasury. Ganga Ram came in 1813, Dina Nath in 1815, and by the last years of the reign Dina Nath was the single indispensable man in Lahore — so indispensable that after the annexation the British kept him on, being the only person who understood the accounts.

Every one of those men was formed by the apparatus of the order the Khalsa had overthrown. The Sikh state did not train its own administrators; it hired the products of somebody else's formation, in somebody else's language, and then discovered — as such states do — that it could not replace them. That is the same finding as the Muslim boy's *maktab*, arriving from the top of the state rather than the bottom.

The second exception is the one place where formation was actually performed, and it was performed on adults, by the army.

The regular battalions took men out of villages, put them in scarlet, drilled them, gave them a wage, a barracks, a unit and a set of commands in a European language, and kept them for years. That is a formation machine, and a good one, and it produced exactly what such machines produce: men whose primary coalition was the regiment. It also produced men who had been formed as *Khalsa soldiers* — the regimental colours carried the likeness of Guru Gobind Singh, the war cry was the Khalsa's, the assemblies were the Khalsa's. What the state built, when it built anything, was a body of armed men taught that they were the Khalsa in arms and that the Khalsa was sovereign.

The reader can see where that goes and this study will not go there yet.

The proof, which arrives after the study's window closes

The test of whether a formation was built is what is standing a generation after the state that built it has gone. On that test the verdict is unambiguous, and it comes from the Sikh community's own subsequent history.

In 1873 — twenty-four years after annexation, in Amritsar, the sacred city — four Sikh pupils of the local mission school announced their intention to become Christians. The shock of it produced the first Singh Sabha, founded by Thakur Singh

Sandhanwalia, a relative of Ranjit Singh's, together with a descendant of Guru Nanak's family and a prince of Kapurthala who had a Christian relative of his own.

Every element of that sentence is evidence. In the holiest city of the Sikhs, a generation after the fall of the Sikh state, the school that had the Sikh boys in it was a Christian mission school, because there was no other kind. The men who reacted were the old ruling families, who had noticed that they had no institution to put a child in. What they then built — the Singh Sabha's schools, the journals, the promotion of Punjabi and Gurmukhi, and finally Khalsa College at Amritsar in 1892 — is the formation apparatus the Sikh state never built, constructed from private subscription forty-three years after the state fell.

And in 1898 Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha published a book whose title was *Ham Hindu Nahin* — We Are Not Hindus.

Stop on that. A century after Ranjit Singh took Lahore, and half a century after the Khalsa had ruled from the Sutlej to the Khyber, it was a live and contested question whether the Sikhs were a distinct people at all, and it had to be settled by argument, in print, against a Hindu revivalist movement asserting that Sikhism was a sect of Hinduism and running reconversion campaigns to prove it. That question does not arise about a population that has been formed. Nobody had to write a book in 1898 explaining to Punjabi Muslims that they were not Hindus, because for eight hundred years an apparatus had been telling their children so before they could ask.

The Khalsa had made superb adults for a hundred and fifty years and had never once been in a position to make a child.

Reading formation against the framework

One distinction offered for the collection's use, one third option beside the two it already has, and one correction to this study's own earlier module.

The distinction: a recruitment formation and a reproduction formation are different machines, and one cannot be substituted for the other.

A *reproduction* formation takes children before their vigilance has matured, installs the account of the world and the list of trusted authorities, and is renewed automatically each generation at no political cost, because parents do the work. It produces a population, compounds over centuries, and is what makes a floor cheap.

A *recruitment* formation takes adults who arrive already formed and re-forms them: by initiation, by oath, by a name, by marks, by a code enforced by the group, and above all by cost. It produces a body, not a population.

The recruitment machine is *deeper per head*. It has to be, because it is working against a completed prior formation, and what lets it win is exactly the thing the

reproduction machine cannot supply: a decision taken at cost in front of witnesses, which is simultaneously a display of sincerity nobody could fake cheaply and a commitment placed beyond bargaining. That is why the men at Delhi in 1716 did not recant when recanting was free, and why a body of a few thousand horse could not be exterminated by a competent provincial government in thirty years of trying.

But it has three limits, and the Punjab shows all three. It cannot be performed on a child, so it never becomes the ground of anybody's self, only a superstructure on ground somebody else laid. It does not compound, because every member has to be recruited individually in every generation. And — the finding worth carrying forward — **it is fed by the persecution it exists to survive, so it weakens exactly as it succeeds.** The Khalsa grew fastest while it was being hunted, because being hunted is what made the initiation expensive and therefore credible. When membership became the road to a jagir, a command and a share of Multan's revenue, the cost that made the display work was gone, and nothing had been built in the meantime that could hold a child.

The form to test elsewhere: **where an order's formation is by adult initiation at cost rather than by childhood installation, expect it to be extraordinarily durable per member, incapable of compounding across generations, and to decay in the moment of its victory — and expect the decay to be invisible for as long as the founding generation is alive.**

The third option: subsidised pluralism, which resembles tolerance and functions as abstention. The collection has two cases so far. A power may form the population it rules, which is expensive and admits them. Or it may withhold formation, as European colonial administrations characteristically did, because forming the conquered as members of the ruling nation would mean conceding they were members — with the result that the incumbent formation holds the field and eventually produces a problem.

The Sikh Punjab is a third: the state funded every incumbent formation and designed none. It endowed the *maktab*, the *pathshala* and the *dharamsala* alike, out of the revenue of a province whose majority it had conquered, and it built no school of its own. This buys quiet cheaply, it is genuinely less cruel than the alternatives, and it produces the same structural result as withholding: **the state never becomes an item in anybody's account of who is worth believing.** The diagnostic is simple and worth applying to other cases — ask not whether a state permits or forbids formation but whether it *designs* any, and if it designs none, expect it to be paying for force what belief would have supplied, and expect the population to have no formed reason to defend it when the floor is tested.

The sharpest version of the finding is the one this case produces and the colonial cases cannot: the abstention operated on the ruler's *own* community. The Sarkar Khalsa did not merely decline to form its Muslim and Hindu subjects. It declined to form Sikhs — endowing the shrines where Sikh children were taught, and leaving them in the hands of hereditary custodians who had never taken the Khalsa initiation and whose practice the Khalsa code condemned. Whatever else was being reproduced in the Gurmukhi schools of the Punjab between 1799 and 1849, the state was not choosing it.

The correction: Module 3 of this study was right about the robe and incomplete about its price, and this module supplies the missing half. That module found that the robe addressed the Khalsa and that nobody was asking the other nine-tenths of the population to believe anything, and treated that as a tolerable arrangement because a revenue demand does not need a robe. That was too easy. A population from which no belief is requested is also a population in which the state has no standing — not merely unloved, but structurally absent from the framework through which its subjects decide what is true and who is worth following. The Punjab's Muslim majority did not hate the Lahore state; they had never been given any account of it at all. When the floor was finally tested at the Sutlej, the state had four decades of revenue receipts from those people and nothing else, and no formation anywhere in the province had ever told a child that the Sarkar Khalsa was the shape of the world.

A note on sources. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module, and that is itself worth stating: the load-bearing material here is institutional and demographic rather than documentary, and the temptation to quote a memorable line from a compilation has been declined. Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner's *History of Indigenous Education in the Panjab since Annexation and in 1882* (Calcutta, 1882) is public domain and has not been read in the original for this study; its classification of school types and its general finding of a dense pre-annexation denominational apparatus are reported here at second hand from the scholarly literature on the report, principally Sarabjeet Kaur's analysis in the *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* (2011) and the summaries in the Sikh reference works. Leitner's figures — pupils under the Lahore Darbar given as something over three hundred thousand against about a hundred and ninety thousand in 1883 — are used here only as an order of magnitude and should not be treated as counts. He was making a case against his own government's education policy, the pre-annexation figure is a reconstruction rather than a survey, and the comparison has been contested since. The structural claim this module actually rests on — that formation in the Sikh Punjab was denominational, dense, and not the state's —

does not depend on the numbers and is corroborated independently by the pattern of *dharmarth* grants and by the composition of the Lahore secretariat.

Reported from modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For the *dharmarth* grants, their distribution across Sikh, Hindu and Muslim recipients, and the finding that the Sikh share was much the largest without being taken from the others, Indu Banga's *Agrarian System of the Sikhs* (1978) and J. S. Grewal's *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, together with the doctoral literature working from the Punjab State Archives dharmarth records. For the Udasi and Nirmala custodianship of the Sikh shrines, its origin in the eighteenth-century persecution, the non-Khalsa character of the *mahants*, and their receipt of *dharmarth* grants from Ranjit Singh and his successors continuing partially into British times, Kiranjeet Sandhu's thesis on the Udasis in the colonial Punjab and Sulakhan Singh's work on heterodoxy in the Sikh tradition, reported at second hand. The characterisation of Udasi and Nirmala practice as Brahmanically inflected, and the account of idol-worship and caste distinction at the shrines, comes substantially through the Singh Sabha and Akali literature and through British administrative records of the 1860s onward — that is, through the parties who were later contesting control of those shrines, and it should be read with that interest in view. For the structure of the Lahore secretariat, the Persian medium, and the Brahmin and Khatri monopoly of the *daftars*, the doctoral literature on the Darbar-i-Mulla drawing on the Khalsa Darbar Records, at second hand.

Dates and events after the study's window. The founding of the Singh Sabha at Amritsar in 1873, and its trigger in the announced conversion of four Sikh pupils of the Amritsar mission school, is the standard account and is reported here from the general literature; the founders named are Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia, Baba Khem Singh Bedi and Bikrama Singh of Kapurthala. Khalsa College, Amritsar, was established in 1892. Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha's *Ham Hindu Nahin* was published in 1898, in response to the Arya Samaj's claim from 1877 that Sikhism was a sect within Vedic Hinduism. These fall outside 1748–1849 and are used strictly as evidence of what did and did not exist when the Sikh state fell, not as part of its narrative.

The framework material. The account of formation used here — that vigilance reads cues rather than verifying the world, that the cues can be forged, that formation precedes and calibrates the vigilance that would screen it, that a commitment made at cost functions as a credibility-enhancing display, and that no person is unformed because knowing at scale is ineliminably dependent on trusted others — is the collection's own, set out in *The Exploit*, and the underlying cognitive science is credited there rather than re-credited here. The 1716 testimony of the East India Company's envoys at Delhi, quoted in this study's opening, is used again in this module as evidence

of what an adult initiation taken at cost produces, and its provenance and textual variants are recorded there.

MODULE 5

Four Rupees, and Two Rupees

The cost column — what the Punjabi cultivator actually paid and actually got, why the same state ran two entirely different arrangements in the same decade, and what people did when the arrangement stopped being worth it.

The question, stated the right way round

The question is not whether the Sikh order was cruel or kind. It is why an ordinary person went on complying with it.

A cultivator in the Bari Doab in 1830 handed over a large share of what he grew to men who came for it twice a year, and did so without a garrison in his village. Something made that the rational thing to do, and the framework's account of what makes it rational has four parts, all of which have to be measured separately.

There is what he *gets* — the benefit side, which in an agrarian order means security of person and crop, a tolerable and predictable demand, water, access to a market, some kind of redress, and the absence of anybody worse arriving.

There is what he *pays if he refuses* — the cost of non-compliance, which is not only what the state will do to him but what his neighbours will do to him, since in a village assessed as a village the man who does not pay is shifting his share onto his kin.

There is whether he **believes the arrangement is right** — which is the cheapest possible enforcement, costs the state nothing per head, and, as the preceding module established, the Lahore state had almost none of, having formed nobody.

And there is **exit** — whether he can go somewhere better, at a cost he can bear.

Where belief is thin, the other three have to carry the whole weight. This module measures them, and it finds something the study did not expect: that the Sikh order ran two arrangements at once, in the same years under the same ruler, which differed so far that they are better treated as two regimes than as one policy applied unevenly.

What the demand actually was

Start with the number, because everything else is calibrated against it.

The dominant method of assessment under Ranjit Singh was *batai* — a share of the actual crop, divided at the threshing floor after harvest. Slightly less common was *kankut*, a share based on appraisal of the standing crop. Between them, on the estimate the scholarship uses, they covered about four-fifths of the area under his control.

Commercially valuable crops — cotton, indigo, sugarcane, tobacco — were assessed instead at cash rates.

The state's share under *batai* ran from about one-eighth to about one-half depending on soil and crop, and Indu Banga's judgement, from the Lahore state's own records, is that it was usually on the higher side.

Take that plainly: a demand approaching half the crop is heavy by any standard, and this study will not soften it. The Mughal demand had been in the same range, a third to a half, and the point of comparison is not the level.

The point of comparison is the *shape*, and here the difference is large enough to change a cultivator's life.

Under the Mughal *zabt* — the system Akbar's revenue establishment built and the one that had prevailed in the Punjab — the demand was fixed in cash, calculated in advance from measured area and standard yields. It did not know what the harvest had been. Under *batai* it could not help knowing, because the assessor was standing at the threshing floor looking at the grain, and his share was a fraction of what was actually there. A ruined harvest produced a small payment. There was no arrears, no shortfall, and nothing to borrow.

The Lahore state went further than the arithmetic required. The collection of four hundred and fifty of the Maharaja's Persian orders assembled by Grewal and Banga contains instructions granting lenient terms to villages damaged by the rivers, and the revenue literature records that in villages liable to serious loss by river action the cultivator was generally relieved of his share of the village's liabilities altogether. The old Shah Nahr canal above Lahore was renovated under his authority, along with the Khanwah and Sohag inundation channels.

And the counter-test arrived after the annexation, delivered by the men who replaced the system. The British substituted a moderate demand fixed in cash for a term of years — lower on paper than what the Sikh state had taken. The consequence is stated in their own administrative literature with unusual candour: the inelasticity of a moderate but fixed demand made it certain that a bad season would eventually come in which the cultivator could not pay, that he would then have to borrow, and that once indebted he would be fortunate ever to escape the moneylender. The famines of the 1860s pushed the Punjab peasantry into exactly that.

So the first entry in the benefit column is not generosity. It is *risk*. The Sikh state took a larger share and took it in a form that could not bankrupt anybody, and for a household living close to subsistence that is worth more than a lower number.

The second entry is that the tenure underneath was not touched. The lineage share, the undivided common, the village council that allocated, the customary block on

selling land out of the brotherhood — all of it survived the conquest intact, as this study established earlier. A cultivator under the Sikhs was paying a new claimant out of an old holding, and the holding was not in question.

The largest benefit, which nobody wrote down

The third entry is the one contemporaries never itemise because it consists of things that stopped happening.

Between 1747 and 1767 the Punjab was crossed by invading armies nine or ten times. What that meant on the ground is recorded in every account of the period: standing crops burned or requisitioned, villages sacked, cattle driven off, men killed, women and children carried away as slaves. It happened, on average, about every other year for twenty years, to a plain whose people could not move their fields.

After 1799 it stopped. No foreign army entered the Punjab in force again until the British crossed the Sutlej in 1845. Forty-six years.

That is the largest single change in the life of an ordinary Punjabi in this entire study, and it is worth more than every revenue concession put together. Malcolm noted the effect in the country he passed through in 1805 — good order, safe roads, capital crime and robbery infrequent — and he was describing a place that within living memory had been a highway for other people's armies.

A share of the crop is a real cost. It is also the price of not having the crop burned, and the men handing it over had fathers who remembered the alternative.

What refusal cost, and who collected it

Now the cost of non-compliance, and here the machinery is cheaper than a reader expects because the state was mostly not the one applying it.

The unit of assessment in the Punjab was the village. The demand went to the village; the village's own council divided it among the co-sharers according to their shares. A man who would not pay was therefore not defying a distant government. He was moving his share onto his cousins, in a settlement where his land, his marriage, his water and his standing all ran through the same body of kin who would carry it.

That is the least expensive enforcement mechanism that exists, and the Sikh state inherited it rather than building it. The state's own coercion was reserved for the level above: a village or a district that would not pay had troops quartered on it, and a chief who would not pay had his estate taken, which is the subject of an earlier module. Between the state and the individual cultivator stood his own brotherhood, doing the collecting.

The exit was closed by the same institution. Land could not be sold out of the lineage; the customary right of pre-emption kept it in. So a man could not liquidate and go. He could abandon and go, and that is a different transaction with a different price.

Two further items belong in the cost column and both cut against the order's reputation.

The first is confessional, and it is documented from a hostile but professional observer at the beginning of the period. Malcolm, describing the Muslim population of the Sikh-ruled districts in 1805, reported that they were numerous, poor and despised, employed in carrying and hard labour, forbidden to eat beef or to say their prayers aloud, seldom assembling in their mosques, and that few of those mosques had escaped destruction. That is from the same pages in which he says the cultivator was treated with more indulgence than in any country he knew. Both are his and neither cancels the other: a light and elastic revenue demand and a religious disability are different instruments and ran together.

The second is what happened to justice, and it turns out to be the same fact as the order's most famous virtue.

It is very widely said that Ranjit Singh abolished capital punishment and that no one was executed by his order in forty years. The claim is not baseless and it is also not what it appears to be, because the alternative to execution was not imprisonment. It was a fine. And in Kashmir the schedule was written down.

Two rupees

William Moorcroft, a veterinary surgeon in the East India Company's service who spent some ten months in the Kashmir valley in 1822 and 1823, left the fullest European account of the province under Sikh government. On the treatment of Kashmiris by Sikhs he recorded that the murder of a native by a Sikh was punished by a fine to the government of sixteen to twenty rupees, of which four rupees were paid to the family of the deceased if he was a Hindu, and two rupees if he was a Muslim.

Read the schedule rather than the outrage. Three things are stated in it.

The state did not kill for killing — which is the famous mercy, and it was real. The state took roughly four-fifths of the penalty for itself and gave the family a fifth or less — which means the offence was construed as a breach of the government's peace rather than as a wrong to the dead man's kin, and the compensation was an afterthought. And the price of a life was graded by religion, at a ratio of two to one, with a Muslim at the bottom in a province that was overwhelmingly Muslim.

That is a cost column written out by the state itself, in figures, and it is the single most useful document in this module. It says exactly what a subject of that province was worth to the men governing him: about two rupees, in a year when two rupees bought a sheep.

And the rest of Moorcroft's account of Kashmir is of a piece with it. He found the people everywhere in the most abject condition, exorbitantly taxed by the Sikh government and subjected to every kind of extortion and oppression by its officers; that the consequence was the gradual depopulation of the country, with only a small fraction of the cultivable surface under crop and the inhabitants starving at home and driven in great numbers to the plains of Hindustan; and that the Sikhs seemed to look upon the Kashmiris as little better than cattle. Every trade was taxed — butchers, bakers, boatmen, fuel-sellers, notaries, scavengers, prostitutes, and above all the shawl-weavers, who paid the *dagshawl* duty on a manufacture that employed, on his estimate, more than a hundred thousand people in Srinagar alone.

The confessional restrictions in Kashmir went further than anything recorded in the Punjab plains: death for cow-slaughter, the Jama Masjid at Srinagar closed, the call to prayer prohibited. They were repealed only in the last years of Sikh rule, by Shaikh Ghulam Muhyi-ud-Din, the first Muslim governor of the province.

And there was a famine in 1832. After it, the state cut the land tax in Kashmir to half the produce and began offering interest-free loans to cultivators — which is a genuine response, arriving after the disaster, and which tells the reader precisely what the demand had been before.

Two provinces, one Maharaja

Set Kashmir beside the Bari Doab and the difficulty of this module becomes the finding.

In the same decade, under the same ruler, drawing on the same treasury and the same army: a Jat cultivator in the Majha paid a heavy but elastic share out of an untouched hereditary holding, in a country where no foreign army had come for thirty years, to a government that granted remissions when the river took his field. And a Muslim weaver in Srinagar paid a duty on every shawl he made, to officers who extorted beyond the schedule, under a government that priced his death at two rupees, in a valley emptying out around him.

Both are the Sikh order. Neither is the exception.

What differentiates them is not religion. The Punjab plains were majority Muslim and their cultivators were not treated as Kashmir's were; the disabilities Malcolm recorded in 1805 are real and are of a different order of magnitude from a closed Jama

Masjid and a banned call to prayer. Nor is it class, since we are comparing cultivators and artisans with each other.

Three things differentiate them, and they compound.

The first is **distance**. Kashmir is beyond the Pir Panjal, and its governor — twelve of them were appointed across twenty-seven years — ran it with a free hand at the far end of a mountain road. What the framework calls the seam between what the centre knows and what happens on the ground is, in a case like this, a physical thing measured in marching days.

The second is **what the province was for**. The Majha villages were the ground the army came out of. The *ghorchara* and then the battalions were recruited from exactly those Jat brotherhoods, which means that squeezing them damaged the thing the state was built on. Kashmir supplied no soldiers. It supplied shawls, and shawls could be taxed to destruction without touching a single recruit.

The third follows from the second and is the least visible. In the Majha the cultivator, the soldier and the sardar were often the same family. There was a channel from a village to the court, along which a grievance could travel. In Kashmir there was no such channel in either direction: nobody at Lahore had a cousin in Srinagar.

So the cost column in this order was **sorted by province**, and the sorting variable was whether the population in question was a source of the floor's own manpower.

Exit, and the people who took it

Which brings the module to the last variable, and to the only place in this study where the ruled can be watched making a decision.

The Punjabi plainsman had no good exit and did not need one. There was abundant waste ground within the Punjab, so a man under pressure broke new land rather than leaving the province; the demand was elastic, so a bad year did not force the question; and across the Sutlej lay British territory offering a lower assessment fixed in cash, which was a worse bargain for anyone living near subsistence, whatever it looked like on paper. He stayed because staying was better, which is the ordinary and unremarkable case.

The Kashmiri exited. In numbers, on foot, over a mountain pass, and it is documented from both sides.

When Moorcroft left the valley in 1823, about five hundred emigrants travelled with him across the Pir Panjal. After the famine of the early 1830s a large influx of Kashmiris reached Amritsar, and the majority of the shawl-weavers left the valley altogether, settling in Punjabi towns where the trade could be carried on — which is why Amritsar acquired a shawl industry and Kashmir began losing one. The European

visitors' population estimates for Srinagar, unreliable as they are, drop by a factor that no plausible mortality can explain and that emigration can.

Two observations follow and both matter to the framework.

The first is that they left rather than rose. There was no Kashmiri rebellion against Sikh rule. A population at the extreme end of an extraction schedule, with its mosque closed and its lives priced in single rupees, walked out over a pass instead of fighting — which is the ordinary answer to the ordinary question about why the oppressed do not revolt, and it is not fatalism. It is arithmetic. Rising means facing the floor; leaving means facing a mountain, and the mountain does not have artillery.

The second is where they went. They did not leave the Sikh order. They walked from the worst-governed province of the Lahore state into its best-governed one, and stayed there, and set up their looms. The exit that was available was internal, and using it moved a man from the arrangement that was not worth complying with to the arrangement that was.

Which is, in the end, a fact about the state's revenue rather than a fact about mercy. Kashmir was among the richest provinces the Maharaja held and its people were being taxed off the land that generated the wealth. The state was consuming its own tax base and could see it happening — the remission of 1832 proves somebody at Lahore was told — and it corrected only after a famine had done the arithmetic for it.

Reading the cost column against the framework

Three contributions, of which the first is the substantial one.

The cost column is sorted, and the sorting variable is manpower. The collection has read cost and benefit as dials a ruler sets for a population. This case shows one ruler running the dials at two entirely different settings simultaneously, and the difference is not religion, not class, not law, and not the ruler's disposition. It is whether the population under the dial is a source of the floor's own soldiers.

Where it is — the Majha villages that filled the *ghorchara* and the battalions — the benefit dial is up and the cost dial is down, because extraction there damages recruitment, because a grievance has a channel to the court through kinsmen in the army, and because the men doing the collecting are of the same brotherhoods as the men being collected from. Where it is not — Kashmir, which supplied shawls and no soldiers — there is nothing to damage, no channel, and no shared kin, and the demand runs up to whatever the province will bear and then past it.

The form to test: **read any composite order province by province rather than as a policy, and expect the cost column to be lightest where the army recruits and heaviest where the revenue is richest and no soldiers come from.** The corollary is a

diagnostic that can be applied without any archive at all — where a conquering order's own soldiers come from the same villages as its taxpayers, expect a moderate settlement whatever the rhetoric; where the taxed and the armed are different populations, expect the schedule to be set by what can be taken rather than by what is sustainable, and expect nobody to notice until the tax base moves.

The variance of a demand matters more to a subsistence cultivator than its level, and the collection has been reading the wrong number. A demand of half the crop that falls with the harvest is survivable indefinitely; a demand of a quarter fixed in cash is a debt trap the first time the rain fails. The Sikh state took more and cost less, and the proof is not an argument but the sequence of events after 1849, when a lower and fixed British assessment produced within twenty years the indebtedness and the famine-driven borrowing that four decades of *batai* had not. When reading a revenue system, therefore, establish first whether the demand knows what the harvest was. That single question separates a heavy arrangement from a ruinous one, and it is more informative than the headline share.

Where a state prices a subject's death instead of punishing it, the price schedule is the cost column stated by the state in its own hand — and it should be read for three things. The presence of a tariff at all establishes that the killing of that subject is a matter of public order rather than of justice. The division between the state's take and the family's establishes whose injury the state thinks it is. And any grading within the schedule is the state's own ranking of its people, published, in numbers. Sixteen to twenty rupees to the government, four to a Hindu family, two to a Muslim one, is not an anecdote about cruelty. It is a document of the kind this collection exists to read, and its most important feature is that the men who set it did not think they were confessing anything.

A last word on the balance, because a module that ends on a tariff will be misread otherwise. The order that priced a Kashmiri's life at two rupees is the same order that stopped the invasions, left the village tenure alone, remitted revenue when the river moved, and taxed in a form that did not bankrupt people. Both columns are real and they were paid by different people. That is not a contradiction to be resolved. It is what a cost column looks like when it has been sorted, and the sorting is the thing this module found.

A note on sources. The account of the Kashmir valley under Sikh government is from William Moorcroft, who was in the valley for some ten months in 1822–23 and whose *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab* was published posthumously in 1841, edited by H. H. Wilson; it is public domain. His observations are reported here from reproductions in the modern literature rather than collated with

the printed text, and the reproductions differ in one material particular: the fraction of the cultivable surface said to be under crop is given as one-sixteenth in most versions and as one-sixth in at least one, and the discrepancy has not been resolved here. The fine schedule for the killing of a Kashmiri by a Sikh — sixteen to twenty rupees to the government, four to a Hindu family, two to a Muslim one — is reported consistently across the versions consulted and is the module's single load-bearing quotation; it should nonetheless be checked against the 1841 printing before it is quoted further. Moorcroft was an East India Company servant travelling in a territory his government had an interest in, at a time when that government was deciding what to think about the Lahore state, and he is not disinterested. John Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs* (1812) is quoted and paraphrased as established earlier in this study, on the cultivator's treatment and on the condition of the Muslim population; both passages are on the same pages of a public-domain text.

Reported from modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For the prevalence of *batai* and *kankut* over roughly four-fifths of the area, the range of the state's share from about one-eighth to about one-half and the judgement that it was usually on the higher side, the *zabt* cash assessment of commercial crops, and the general contrast with the Mughal system, Indu Banga, *Agrarian System of the Sikhs* (1978). For the orders granting lenient terms to villages damaged by river action, J. S. Grewal and Indu Banga, *Civil and Military Affairs of Maharaja Ranjit Singh: A Study of 450 Orders in Persian* (Amritsar, 1987), reported at second hand; that collection is the nearest thing this study has to the Lahore state speaking directly about individual villages and deserves direct examination. For the renovation of the Shah Nahr and the Khanwah and Sohag canals, the Lahore gazetteer literature. For the British administration's own account of the consequences of a fixed cash demand — the certainty of a bad season, the resort to borrowing, the moneylender, and the famines of the 1860s — the Punjab administration reports as digested in the modern agrarian literature; the judgement is the colonial revenue service's about itself, which is why it is worth having. For the Mughal demand of a third to a half, Irfan Habib as summarised in the standard literature.

Contested, and flagged. That Ranjit Singh abolished capital punishment is very widely asserted and is repeated in the reference literature, which also notes accounts of offenders being hanged under his authority; the claim is used here only in the narrow and corroborated sense that the state's ordinary penalty for homicide in Kashmir was a fine, and no view is taken on whether the wider claim survives examination. It should be tested against the Lahore judicial records if any survive. The Kashmir population figures given by European travellers — Moorcroft's eight hundred thousand for the

province in 1823 and Hügel's much lower figure fourteen years later — are estimates by men who counted nothing, and the collapse between them cannot be taken at face value, though it is not consistent with a stable population either; no census was taken in the Sikh period. The number of emigrants who crossed the Pir Panjal with Moorcroft in 1823, given as about five hundred, is his. The Kashmir religious prohibitions — death for cow-slaughter, the closure of the Jama Masjid at Srinagar, the ban on the call to prayer, and their repeal under Shaikh Ghulam Muhyi-ud-Din — are reported from the standard literature on Kashmir, which on this subject is written within a live political dispute about the Sikh and Dogra periods and should be read accordingly; the individual measures are not contested, the framing around them is. The reduction of the Kashmir land tax to half the produce and the offer of interest-free loans after the famine of 1832 is likewise reference-literature material.

The count of invasions. The figure of nine or ten crossings of the Punjab by invading armies between 1747 and 1767 follows the standard narrative of the Durrani campaigns established earlier in this study and in the companion study of Ahmad Shah Durrani; the exact count depends on what is treated as a distinct invasion.

MODULE 6

Rooms Full of Them

Extraction — something over three crores a year, the boundary between the districts the state collected from and the districts it sold, and where a third of everything went.

What the machine took

The Lahore state's annual revenue at the height of Ranjit Singh's reign is conventionally given at a little over three crores of rupees — something over thirty million — of which about two crores came from the land. The figure descends from Sita Ram Kohli's work on the Lahore records and has been repeated ever since; it should be treated as an order of magnitude and not a balance, since no consolidated budget of the Sikh state survives and the categories that produced the number are not always visible.

The rest came from customs and transit dues on a country that sat across the trade of Central Asia, from the salt of the Range, from the mints, from tribute paid by hill and frontier chiefs, from fines, from the periodic resumption of estates, and from confiscation. When Multan fell in 1818 the treasure taken there was put in the region of two crores — a figure from the reference literature that has never been audited and probably never can be — and the province's annual revenue afterwards at over twenty lakhs. Kashmir, after the reductions that followed the famine of 1832, was the second-richest province the state held. The territories east of the Sutlej alone yielded over twenty lakhs a year.

The administration that gathered it was a four-province structure — Lahore, Multan, Kashmir, Peshawar — each under a *nazim*, with *kardars* below him doing the actual assessment and collection in the districts, and a dozen record offices at Lahore keeping the accounts. That is the machine as the textbooks describe it, and as far as it goes it is accurate.

It is also, for about half the kingdom, not what happened.

The two systems, and the line between them

The Lahore state ran two entirely different methods of extraction at the same time, and where the boundary between them fell explains almost everything the preceding module found.

In the core districts the state collected directly. A *kardar* assessed the crop by *batai* or *kankut*, took the state's share at the threshing floor, and accounted for it upward. That system knows what the harvest was, adjusts automatically when it fails, and leaves the state exposed to the weather — which is precisely why the school histories list it as a defect, noting that under *batai* the government could have no idea of its income in advance.

In a great many other places the state did not collect at all. It sold the right to collect.

The list of territories farmed out is long and it is worth setting down in full, because its length is the point: Mandi, Kullu, Jasvan, Kangra, Kutlehar, Siba, Nurpur, Haripur, Datarpur, Basohli, Chhachh, Hazara, Rawalpindi, Hasan Abdal, Dhanni, Katas, Chakwal, Tonk, Bannu, Mankera, Ramnagar, Mitha Tiwana, Bhera, Khushab, Pind Dadan Khan, Gujrat, Wazirabad, Sialkot, the Jalandhar Doab and Sheikhupura.

Read that list and note what is in it. The hill states, certainly, and the trans-Indus country where a *kardar* would have needed an escort. But also Sialkot, Gujrat, Wazirabad, Sheikhupura and the whole Bist Jalandhar Doab — settled, well-watered, thickly populated districts in the heart of the kingdom, forty to eighty miles from the capital.

Under a revenue farm the contractor pays the state an agreed sum, in advance or in instalments, and keeps whatever he can collect above it. The state's income becomes fixed and knowable, which is exactly what *batai* could not deliver. And the contractor's interest becomes the length of his contract.

That last clause is the whole of it. A *kardar* is an officer whose district he may hold for years and whose failure is visible upward; a farmer is a buyer whose asset is a lease. If the lease runs three years, nothing that happens in the fourth is his concern. Every incentive to keep a cultivator solvent, a weaver at his loom, a well in repair or a village populated ends at the expiry date. And the mechanism requires no malice from anybody: the ruler wants a predictable income, the contractor wants a return, and between the two of them a province is squeezed by ordinary commercial logic.

Set this beside the previous module's finding and the picture completes itself. The Majha villages — the recruiting ground, assessed by *batai*, remissions granted when the river moved — were collected from. Kashmir and the hill country and the trans-Indus districts were sold. The two arrangements produced two different countries under one crown, and the difference does not require anyone at Lahore to have thought about Kashmiris at all.

Where it went

Now the question the framework insists on, which is not how much was taken but what it was spent on. Here the case delivers an answer of unusual precision, because the pay records survived.

The army establishment of the Lahore state in 1845 stood, on the compilation Sita Ram Kohli made from the *Daftar-i-Fauj*, at 70,721 men: 53,962 infantry, 6,235 cavalry and 10,524 artillery. The total expenditure on them was Rs 1,27,96,482 — a little under one crore and twenty-eight lakhs — which was **about one-third of the annual revenue of the state**.

The pay scale is in the same records, and it is worth having in front of the reader because it shows what the money bought. A commandant drew between sixty and a hundred and fifty rupees a month. An adjutant thirty to sixty. A major twenty-one to twenty-five, a *subadar* twenty to thirty, a *jamadar* fifteen to twenty-two, a *havildar* thirteen to fifteen, a *naik* ten to twelve, a sergeant eight to twelve, and a sepoy less.

One-third of everything the state took, in cash, went to seventy thousand men at those rates. And that figure understates the military share substantially, because it counts only the cash payroll. It does not count the *jagirs* — the estates assigned on condition of furnishing horsemen, which are the subject of an earlier module and which never entered the cash accounts at all. Nor does it count the artillery park, the fortifications, the powder, or the campaigns.

Against that, set what the extraction did not fund. It built no schools; the state paid grants to religious establishments and designed no formation of its own, which the preceding module established at length. It maintained no judiciary worth the name; the village council settled village disputes, the *qazi* handled Muslim personal law, and the state's own penalty for homicide in Kashmir was a graded fine. It renovated the old Shah Nahr canal above Lahore and cleared the Khanwah and Sohag inundation channels, which is real and is nearly the whole of the public works.

And a very large share of what was left went into a fort.

The shawls on the shelves

The *toshakhana* — the treasure house — was the department that held the state's specie, the jewels, the robes of honour given to visitors, and the accumulated gifts of forty years of tribute. Its principal deposits were at Lahore and behind the walls of Gobindgarh at Amritsar, the fort Ranjit Singh had built on the site of the one he took from the Bhangis in 1805.

Isabella Fane, daughter of the Commander-in-Chief in India, saw its contents at Lahore in 1837, and what struck her was not the jewels. It was the shawls. Handsome things, she wrote, shawls and kincobs and silks and satins, horses with their trappings, a sword, jewellery — and above all the collection of Kashmir shawls, laid out on shelves and heaped in bales, *rooms full of them*, not to be described.

Set that beside the previous module and the circuit closes. The *dagshawl* duty that Moorcroft found being levied on the weavers of Srinagar — in a valley whose people were leaving over the Pir Panjal in hundreds, whose cultivable land was mostly out of cultivation, and where a man's life was priced at two rupees — ended as bales of finished shawls stacked on shelves in a treasury four hundred miles away, where an English visitor could not count them.

That is not a metaphor for extraction. It is extraction, in its physical form, sitting in a room.

What happened to it afterwards belongs to a later module and can be stated in one line: in 1849 Lord Dalhousie took a personal interest in the contents of the *toshakhana*, the Koh-i-Noor went to Queen Victoria by way of a ceremony at which a boy of eleven was made to hand it over, and the rest was dispersed.

What the machine was for

Add the columns and the shape of the state becomes plain, and it is worth stating without editorial because the plainness is the finding.

The Lahore state took roughly a third to a half of the crop from a cultivator in the districts it collected from directly, and sold the right to take rather more than that from the districts it farmed. It spent about a third of its cash revenue on seventy thousand soldiers. It assigned a further and probably comparable share, off the cash books, to men holding estates on condition of producing more soldiers. It put much of the remainder into a hoard of coin, jewels and Kashmiri shawls behind a fort wall. It spent almost nothing on anything else.

This was a machine for converting the agricultural surplus of the Punjab into armed men, and it had very nearly no other function.

Two things have to be said about that immediately, and they pull in opposite directions.

The first is that the machine was not idling. What the army bought was the largest single benefit any Punjabi received in this period: after nine or ten invasions in twenty years, none for forty-six. The circuit that ran from the cultivator's threshing floor to the sepoy's eight rupees and back to the cultivator's undisturbed field was a real circuit, and it delivered.

The second is that a state which returns nearly the whole of its extraction to its own floor of force, and puts the rest in a vault, has no constituency anywhere outside its army. It has no educated class formed in its schools, because it has none. It has no merchant interest bound to it by charter or monopoly. It has no clergy dependent on it, having endowed everybody's clergy impartially and made none of them its own. It has no judiciary, no professional civil service beyond a dozen record offices staffed by families trained under the last regime, and no body of subjects who were ever asked to believe anything.

What it has is seventy thousand men whose living depends on the treasury, and a hoard.

Who was holding the guns

One detail from the same pay records deserves separating out, because it complicates every account of this state and because the study did not expect it.

The composition of the army by community, on Kohli's compilation of the *Daftar-i-Fauj*, was roughly sixty per cent Sikh, twenty per cent Muslim and twenty per cent Hindu **in the infantry and cavalry**. The artillery was different. The artillery regiments were predominantly Muslim, some of them under European officers.

Consider what that means. The artillery was the arm the whole transformation had been about. It was the thing the confederacy had lacked and the thing that ended it; it was what came down the Indus to Multan in 1818 and breached a wall that seven cavalry campaigns had failed to touch; twenty-two guns in 1819 and a hundred and eighty-eight in 1838 is the single clearest measure of what Ranjit Singh built. And the men serving it were drawn principally from the community that the state's coin did not address, that its formation apparatus did not reach, that had no place in the account the order gave of itself, and whose position in the Sikh-ruled districts Malcolm had described in 1805 as poor and despised.

They served, and served well, and there is no evidence of disloyalty. The point is not suspicion. The point is that the state's decisive weapon was held by men whose entire attachment to it ran through the paymaster — and the pay, as an English observer noted in 1838, habitually ran a year or more into arrears.

That is a structural fact about an extraction machine, and it belongs in this module rather than in a later one, because it is a fact about where the money went and who was waiting for it.

Reading extraction against the framework

Three contributions.

The revenue farm is the instrument that sorts a cost column, and it does so without anyone intending it. The preceding module found that the Sikh order ran two entirely different arrangements for its subjects, and attributed the sorting to distance from the capital and to whether a province supplied soldiers. Both are real. But this module identifies the actual mechanism, and it is contractual rather than attitudinal.

Where a state collects through its own officers, it collects a share of what exists and bears the risk of a bad year; its horizon is the horizon of the office, which is indefinite. Where it sells the right to collect, it exchanges that risk for a fixed sum, and in doing so **it substitutes the contractor's time horizon for its own**. A farmer holding a three-year lease has no interest in year four. Every consideration that restrains a permanent government — the tax base, the population, the wells, the looms — falls outside his accounting, and he is not being wicked when he ignores them; he is reading his contract.

The form to test elsewhere: **map any composite order's extraction by method before mapping it by province or creed, and expect the worst-documented suffering to fall on the farmed side of the line, whatever the ruler's disposition and whatever the official rates say.** The diagnostic is cheap and does not require a moral judgement about anybody: find the boundary between direct collection and revenue farming, and you have found the boundary between the two countries inside the state. In this case that boundary runs, unexpectedly, through the settled heart of the kingdom — Sialkot, Gujrat, Wazirabad and the whole Jalandhar Doab were farmed — which means the sorting was never a simple matter of the far provinces being neglected. It was a matter of which districts had been sold.

The destination test: what an extraction machine funds is a statement of who has a stake in the state surviving. The collection has asked where the revenue goes and generally found the answer diffuse. Here it is not diffuse and the arithmetic is available: about a third of the cash to the standing army, a further large share off the books to estates conditional on producing horsemen, a substantial residue to a hoard, and effectively nothing to formation, justice, or a civil establishment beyond a dozen record offices.

Stated as a general form: **the constituency of a state is the list of people whose living depends on its revenue, and that list can be read directly off the expenditure side.** Where the expenditure is almost entirely military and the remainder is hoarded, the state has exactly one constituency, and the prediction follows without

any need for hindsight — that when the ruler who balances that constituency against itself is removed, the army will be the only organised claimant on the treasury and there will be no second institution with a reason to restrain it, because no second institution was ever funded into existence.

That is not a claim about what happened after 1839. It is a claim about what the expenditure side of a budget tells you before it happens, and this study will test it in due course against the events.

And a correction to this study's own reading of the robe. Module 3 found the robe addressed exclusively to the Khalsa and the machine staffed from the whole population, and treated the mismatch as tolerable because the majority were being asked for revenue rather than belief. Module 4 found the price of that in formation. This module finds it in the artillery.

The state's most decisive military instrument — the thing that distinguished it from the confederacy it replaced and from every neighbour except the British — was manned predominantly by the community that the coin did not name, the shrine did not include, the schools were not built for and the account of the order left out. Their attachment ran entirely through the paymaster. **Where the robe does not reach the men holding the state's most technically decisive weapon, the wage is the only thing holding them, and the wage is therefore not an administrative detail but a load-bearing member.** That the pay ran a year in arrears is, on that reading, the most alarming single fact in the Lahore records, and it was true throughout the years of the state's greatest apparent strength.

A note on sources. The one quotation in this module is a four-word phrase from Isabella Fane, who visited the Lahore court in 1837 as the daughter of Sir Henry Fane, Commander-in-Chief in India, describing the Kashmir shawls in the *toshakhana*; it is reported here from a modern scholarly article quoting her letters and has not been collated with any printed edition of them. Her letters date from 1836–38 and the underlying text is out of copyright; the modern edited edition is not, and nothing beyond the short phrase and a paraphrase is taken.

Reported from the Lahore state's own records, at second hand. The army establishment of 1845 — 70,721 men, comprising 53,962 infantry, 6,235 cavalry and 10,524 artillery — the total expenditure of Rs 1,27,96,482, the statement that this was about one-third of the annual revenue, the pay scale from commandant to sepoy, and the communal composition of the arms (roughly sixty per cent Sikh, twenty per cent Muslim and twenty per cent Hindu in the infantry and cavalry, with the artillery predominantly Muslim) all derive from Sita Ram Kohli's catalogue of the *Daftar-i-Fauj* within the Khalsa Darbar Records, compiled from 1915 and published from

1919, and are taken here from the reference literature summarising that catalogue rather than from the catalogue itself. The Khalsa Darbar Records comprise some 129 bundles held after 1849 in the Punjab civil secretariat, with fifteen supplementary bound volumes of duplicate orders and correspondence, covering 1811 to 1849. They are the Lahore government's own paperwork and are the best evidence in this study; the fact that this module reads them through a summary rather than directly is a limitation and is stated as one. The communal composition figures in particular carry weight in modern argument and should be verified against Kohli before being used further.

Figures, and their status. Total annual revenue of "a little over three crores of rupees," of which about two crores from land, is the standard figure in the reference and textbook literature descending from Kohli and Hari Ram Gupta; no consolidated budget of the Sikh state survives and the figure is an estimate. It is also not obviously reconcilable with an army cost of Rs 1.28 crore representing one-third of revenue, which would imply something closer to three crore and eighty lakhs; the discrepancy may be a matter of date, the 1845 army being larger than Ranjit Singh's, and is left unresolved here rather than smoothed. The treasure taken at Multan in 1818, put at over two crores, and Multan's subsequent annual revenue of over twenty lakhs, are reference-literature figures with no audit behind them. The cis-Sutlej yield of over twenty lakhs a year is likewise. The list of farmed territories is reported from the standard biographical literature on Ranjit Singh and has not been checked against the revenue records; its accuracy at the level of individual districts should not be assumed, though the general fact of extensive revenue farming is not in dispute.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For the four-province structure, the *nazim* and *kardar* establishment, the dozen record offices, and the working of *batai* and *kankut*, Indu Banga, *Agrarian System of the Sikhs* (1978), and the textbook literature descended from it. For the canal works, the Lahore gazetteer material. For the history of the *toshakhana* as an institution and its fate after 1849, the reference literature; the account of Dalhousie's interest in its contents and of the presentation of the Koh-i-Noor comes substantially through Sikh sources hostile to the annexation and through the memoir of Misr Beli Ram, the treasury's keeper, and is used here only for the bare sequence of events. Earlier findings of this study — Moorcroft on Kashmir, the *dagshawl* duty and the emigration over the Pir Panjal, Malcolm on the condition of the Punjab Muslims, the artillery series of 1819 to 1838, Osborne on arrears of pay, and the terms of the service *jagirs* — are carried forward from Modules 1, 2 and 5 with the provenance and cautions recorded there.

MODULE 7

The Disclosure of Documents

Information and suppression — an intelligence service that watched every court and no province, a Persian weekly that reported one capital and not the other, and an officer punished not for being wrong but for the route by which he was right.

Where the seam runs in a case like this

In a colonial order the seam is easy to find. It runs between the capital that funds a conquest and the ground where the conquest is carried out, and the whole art of the thing is keeping the two ends from meeting: what the metropole is told has to remain compatible with what the metropole is prepared to pay for.

This order had no metropole. The Punjab paid for its own conquests out of its own revenue, and the people who did the killing lived in the same villages as the people who paid for it. So the seam has to be looked for somewhere else, and in this case it runs in three directions at once, none of which is the familiar one.

It runs vertically, between Lahore and its own provinces — and the interesting finding is not that the centre was deceived but that it had arranged not to need to know. It runs laterally, between Lahore and the courts around it, and in that direction the flow was heavy, professional and reciprocal until, quite late, it stopped being reciprocal. And it runs, in the last decade, in the one direction the framework's colonial cases would recognise — between an army in the field and a government at home — except that in this case the government was in Calcutta and the officer who broke it was British.

What the Maharaja knew about other kings

Start with what the Lahore state was good at, because it was very good.

The Darbar maintained newswriters — *akhbar navis* — stationed at the courts and cities that mattered to it, and a corps of runners called *jauns* or *pairs* who carried their reports in. There were newswriters in Kabul and in Afghanistan generally, at Kashmir, in Sindh, at Ludhiana where the British political agency sat, and in the cis-Sutlej principalities of Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Kaithal and Kalsia. The reports came daily. Alongside them the Darbar kept *vakils* — resident agents — attached to foreign courts on a reciprocal basis, and received the *vakils* of the cis-Sutlej states, of Rajputana, of the Maratha country and of Nepal.

The system worked in the other direction too, and the surviving evidence of it is one of the more instructive documents in this study.

A set of Persian newsletters covering the years 1810 to 1817 survives — a hundred and ninety-three loose sheets, part of a larger collection held in the Maratha records — reporting the doings of the Lahore court. They are headed *Akhbar-i-Deorhi Sardar Ranjit Singh Bahadur*, the news of Sardar Ranjit Singh's gate, and each carries the day of the week, the date in the Hijri era, and the place of writing. The newswriter is anonymous and, as the cataloguers note, impersonal: he reports bare facts without comment or opinion. Most of the letters come from the fort at Lahore, some from Gobindgarh, Gujrat, Attock, Wazirabad, Rajauri, Sialkot and Rawalpindi. They were probably compiled for the Peshwa's record office, which gathered news from Indian courts generally.

And ten of the letters covering 1810 to 1812 close with a formula: *zabani Khushhal Singh khabardar nawishtah shud* — written on the basis of verbal information supplied by Khushal Singh, the informant. The editors identify him as Jamadar Khushal Singh, the *deorhi* officer — the Maharaja's chief chamberlain, the man who controlled access to his person.

Consider that plainly. A Maratha government four hundred miles away was receiving weekly intelligence on the Sikh court, sourced by name from the officer who stood at its door. Nothing about this appears to have been secret from the Lahore court itself; a chamberlain briefing a foreign newswriter was ordinary practice in the period, and Khushal Singh was not disgraced. But it establishes something about the porosity of a court in this world: the information ran out of it as freely as it ran in, and the same men managed both flows.

What the Maharaja knew about his own provinces

Now turn the system through ninety degrees and it disappears.

There is no evidence of anything comparable running upward from the districts. The Darbar had a newswriter at Kabul reporting on the Amir. It had none reporting on what was happening to the shawl-weavers of Srinagar. It had daily runners from Ludhiana and none from the Bist Jalandhar Doab, forty miles away.

This is not carelessness and it is not a gap in the record. It follows directly from how the state extracted, and the connection is the most important thing in this module.

Where the Lahore state collected directly, through its own *kardars* by *batai*, it could not avoid knowing. A share of the actual crop, divided at the threshing floor, requires an officer standing in the village with the grain in front of him, and his account travels upward. Assessment of that kind *is* an information system: the state cannot learn its

own income without learning the harvest, and it cannot learn the harvest without learning something about the people who grew it. The school histories list this as the defect of *batai* — that the government could form no idea of its income in advance — and they are right about the inconvenience and wrong about what it cost to remove.

Where the state farmed the revenue, none of that happened. The contractor paid an agreed sum and kept the excess. What arrived at Lahore was a figure. What did not arrive was the harvest, the mortality, the abandoned wells, the emptying villages, or the price at which a weaver was being made to sell.

So the very long list of farmed territories set out in the previous module — the hill states, Hazara, Bannu, Mankera, Khushab, Pind Dadan Khan, and also Sialkot, Gujrat, Wazirabad, Sheikhupura and the whole Jalandhar Doab — is not only an extraction map. It is a map of the places about which the government of the Punjab had deliberately purchased the right not to know.

A revenue farm is an information-destroying instrument. That is not a side effect; it is half of what is being bought. The state exchanges variance in its income for certainty, and in the same transaction it exchanges knowledge of a province for a number. The contractor's business becomes private, and stays private, and the state has no standing to enquire into it so long as the instalments come.

Kashmir supplies the test, and it is exact. Moorcroft was in the valley in 1822 and 1823 and found the country depopulating, most of its cultivable land out of crop, every trade taxed, and people leaving over the passes in hundreds. Lahore reduced the demand in 1832 — after a famine.

That is a nine-year interval between a competent foreign observer being able to see the province failing and the government that owned it acting. And the trigger was not a report. It was the arithmetic: when a province is emptying, eventually the farm cannot be bid and the instalments stop. The state found out about Kashmir the way an absentee landlord finds out about a fire, which is when the rent fails to arrive.

The man at the centre could not read

One further structural fact belongs here, and it is usually mentioned as a curiosity.

Ranjit Singh was illiterate. He had no formal education and never acquired letters. Every despatch, every newswriter's report, every treaty draft, every account from the twelve record offices reached him through another man reading it aloud. And the output ran the same way in reverse: he spoke his orders in Punjabi, a *munshi* rendered them into Persian, and the paper was then sealed twice — once in Gurmukhi with *Akal Sahai Ranjit Singh*, once in Persian with *mulahiza shud*, it has been examined.

He was nonetheless, by every contemporary account including hostile ones, exceptionally well informed and very hard to deceive. He interrogated visitors relentlessly, remembered what he was told, and cross-checked one informant against another. The illiteracy did not make him ignorant.

What it made him was *dependent in a particular direction*, and the direction matters. The men who read the world to him and wrote his will back out to it were the Persian-literate secretariat — Bhawani Das from Kabul, Ganga Ram, Dina Nath — Brahmin and Khatri families trained in the administrative culture of the empire the Khalsa had overthrown. The Sikh order had formed none of them, as this study established earlier; it hired the products of the displaced order's schooling because it had built no schooling of its own.

So the single point through which the whole state's information passed could not check a document against itself, and the men who could were formed by somebody else. That is a fact about the architecture of the state's knowledge, not about the man, and its consequences are for a later module: an apparatus of that kind runs beautifully under a sovereign who can interrogate ten men and catch the discrepancy, and has no defences at all under one who cannot.

The newspaper that reported one capital

Now the lateral seam, in the years when it stopped being symmetrical.

In November 1834 the British North-West Frontier Agency at Ludhiana established a weekly newspaper in Persian, the *Akhbar Ludhiana*. It was printed first at the American Missionary Press in Ludhiana and from June 1841 at the Pashauri Mall Press, and it ran until about 1844. It began at four pages and doubled within two years. Its circulation was small and it existed, on the reference literature's own account, primarily to serve the needs of the Company's government.

Its subject was Lahore. News from the Sikh capital was for several years the front-page matter: the day-to-day proceedings of Ranjit Singh's court, his decrees to civil and military officers, the visits of envoys from other states, and — this is the part worth pausing on — his treatment of his soldiers, his enforcement of law, and his collection of revenue.

And it reported nothing about the activities of the British political agencies at Ludhiana or Ambala.

That is the seam manufactured as an object. Not censorship in the ordinary sense: nobody was suppressing a Punjabi press, because there was none. A designed asymmetry, printed weekly in the language of the region's administration, on a press belonging to a Christian mission, describing one government's soldiers and revenue

and taxes in detail while the government that paid for the paper does not appear in it at all.

It is worth being precise about the direction it faced. Persian was read at Lahore, at Kabul, at Patiala and by every *munshi* in northern India — and by the Company's own political officers, for whom it was a digest. A Persian weekly on the Sikh court served the agency that produced it and was legible to the court it described. What it produced, over ten years, was a public record in which the Lahore state's internal management was a matter of weekly report and the British agency's was not a subject at all.

Set beside it what the Lahore Darbar had: a newswriter at Ludhiana, sending reports to one man who could not read them.

The disclosure of documents

The last seam is the one the collection knows best, and in this case it broke at the far end, in the metropole, and the man it broke on was one of theirs.

Joseph Davey Cunningham entered the Bengal Engineers in 1832, joined Colonel Claude Wade on the Sikh frontier as assistant in 1837, was present at the meeting of Lord Auckland and Ranjit Singh in 1838, went with Wade through the Khyber in 1839, was placed in charge of Ludhiana in 1840, went on a special mission to Jammu in 1841, and served as a political officer with the army in the field during the First Anglo-Sikh War. He spent four years writing *A History of the Sikhs*, and published it in 1849.

The book was well received. The last chapter was not.

In it Cunningham gave his account of how the war of 1845–46 had actually been won, and the account had two parts. The first was that the Governor-General, Sir Henry Hardinge, had done nothing to arrest the sequence of provocations that made the Sikh army distrust British intentions, so that the war became unavoidable — a war, on Cunningham's reading, that the British precipitated and could as easily have lost. The second was more specific: that two of the Sikh commanders, Lal Singh and Tej Singh, were in communication with the British during the campaign, and that the Sikh army was defeated because it was betrayed by the men leading it.

Hardinge took, in the Victorian phrase, grave umbrage. In 1850 Cunningham was removed from his political agency and ordered to ordinary regimental duty. The Dictionary of National Biography, written by his own countrymen forty years afterwards, states the consequences and the stated grounds:

> *This meant a reduction of his income to about one-fourth, besides the certainty of never being again employed in the political service, and the nominal cause of his*

> *disgrace was the disclosure of documents only known to him in his confidential, political capacity.*

Read the charge. It is not that he was wrong. It is not that he had libelled anyone, or invented, or exaggerated. The offence was **the disclosure of documents only known to him in his confidential, political capacity** — which is to say, the offence was the route.

And the same article, in the same paragraph, draws the conclusion that a reader is bound to draw:

> *the truth or falsity of Cunningham's statements has not yet been proved... their truth seems probable from the prompt disgrace which fell upon the author.*

The British establishment's own reference work, at the end of the century, treats the punishment as evidence for the claim.

There was a second and more sophisticated instrument. Hardinge prevailed on J. W. Kaye — an acknowledged authority on Indian history, and therefore a man whose disagreement would carry — to write a full-dress review of the book in the *Calcutta Review* rebutting its thesis. The review opened a controversy that ran the rest of the century, and the label attached to Cunningham in it was that of an apologist for the Khalsa. Punish the man, then commission the refutation, then let the argument about his reliability replace the argument about the facts.

Cunningham made no public complaint. He was promoted captain, appointed to the Meerut division of public works, and died near Ambala in February 1851, aged thirty-eight. His brother brought out a second edition in 1853 with a preface arguing that history is only of value when written by a man superior to private feeling.

The verdict of the subsequent scholarship is that the book is a standard and responsible work, and that Cunningham was substantially right about the war.

Reading the seam against the framework

Three contributions, of which the first joins two modules together and the third is a tool the collection can use on other cases without any archive at all.

A revenue farm destroys information as deliberately as it stabilises income, and the two are the same transaction. The preceding module identified revenue farming as the instrument that sorted this order's cost column, converting the state's time horizon into a contractor's. This module identifies the other half of what was purchased. Direct assessment by crop-share cannot function without generating knowledge: an officer has to stand in the village and look at the grain, and what he

learns travels upward whether anyone wants it or not. A farm replaces all of that with a figure.

So the general form: **the method by which a state takes its revenue determines what it is capable of knowing about its own subjects, and a state that farms has bought ignorance along with predictability.** The diagnostic is that such a state will discover a failing province late, and will discover it through arithmetic rather than through report — the instalments become unbiddable, and only then does anybody ask why. Kashmir was legibly failing to a foreign traveller in 1823 and was relieved by Lahore in 1832, after a famine. Nine years is the width of that seam, and it was not created by anybody lying. It was created by a contract.

This also revises how the collection should read the ordinary complaint that crop-sharing is administratively primitive. It is administratively expensive, which is a different thing, and part of what the expense buys is the state's eyesight.

An intelligence service is built to answer the question its builder is afraid of, and its coverage map is therefore a map of what the ruler thinks can hurt him. The Lahore Darbar's system was excellent and it pointed entirely sideways: newswriters at Kabul, in Sindh, at Ludhiana, in the cis-Sutlej states; runners bringing daily reports; resident agents exchanged with a dozen courts. Not one of those posts was pointed downward at the state's own population.

That was a correct reading of the threat and this study should say so rather than score a point. Nothing the ruled did could break this floor, and the previous module's account of the Kashmiris establishes it: at the extreme of extraction they walked over a mountain rather than rise. A ruler who spends his intelligence budget on other rulers is not being negligent; he is spending it where the danger is.

But the form worth carrying is this: **a surveillance system tells you what its owner feared, and the places it does not cover are the places he had concluded were safe.** Where the collection finds an order watching its peers intensively and its subjects not at all, it has found a ruler who knows his floor is secure — and it has also found a state that will be unable to see any slow change in its own base, because it has no instrument pointed at it. The two go together and cannot be separated: the confidence that makes the surveillance unnecessary is what makes the blindness affordable.

And the tool: where a state punishes disclosure instead of rebutting content, the punishment is evidence, and its aim tells you how strong the evidence is. Hardinge did not say Cunningham had invented the correspondence with Lal Singh and Tej Singh. He said Cunningham had used documents known to him only in a confidential capacity — which concedes that the documents existed, that they said what he reported, and that the objection was to their leaving the file.

That distinction is worth formalising because it is cheap to apply and it does not require access to anything sealed. **When an authority responds to a damaging account, note whether the response addresses the claim or the channel.** A response to the claim — this did not happen, the figures are wrong, the witness was not there — leaves the question open. A response to the channel — you had no right to that document, you have broken a confidence, you disclosed material from your official position — has already answered it. The Dictionary of National Biography understood this perfectly well and said so in print in the 1880s: the truth of the statements seemed probable from the promptness of the disgrace.

The corollary is the second instrument in the sequence and it is the more durable one. Hardinge did not stop at removing Cunningham's income and his career. He commissioned a rebuttal from an authority, and the rebuttal shifted the subject from what happened at Ferozeshah to whether Cunningham was reliable, where it stayed for fifty years. **Where the collection finds a commissioned refutation following a punishment, expect the resulting controversy to be the real instrument, because a dispute about a witness's credibility is a permanent substitute for an examination of his evidence.**

A closing note about this study's own position. Every module here has leaned on Cunningham for the shape of the eighteenth century and on Malcolm for the misl period. Both were officers of a government that was deciding what to do about the Punjab, and both should be read as such. But the specific thing that happened to Cunningham cuts the other way, and it is worth saying plainly: the reason his account of 1845 can be trusted is not that he was disinterested. It is that his own government destroyed his career for publishing it, and stated as the grounds that he had disclosed documents rather than that he had got them wrong.

A note on sources. The two quotations are from the article on Joseph Davey Cunningham in the *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885–1900*, a public-domain text: on the terms of his disgrace — the reduction of income to about one-fourth, the certainty of never again being employed politically, and the nominal cause being the disclosure of documents known to him only in his confidential capacity — and on the writer's judgement that the truth of Cunningham's statements seemed probable from the promptness of the punishment. The *DNB* is the British establishment's own reference work, compiled by men with no sympathy for the Khalsa, which is what makes the second passage worth having.

Reported from the Lahore and Maratha records, at second hand. The Lahore Darbar's newswriter and courier system — the *akhbar navis* posted at Kabul, Kashmir, Sindh, Ludhiana and in the cis-Sutlej states, the runners called *jauns* or *pairs* bringing

daily reports, and the reciprocal exchange of *vakils* — is reported from the reference literature on the Lahore Darbar and on the Persian newsletters. The newsletters themselves — the *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, also called *Akhbar-i-Deorhi Sardar Ranjit Singh Bahadur*, comprising a hundred and ninety-three loose sheets covering 1810 to 1817, part of a larger collection in the Maratha records and probably compiled for the Peshwa's office — are described here from the catalogue literature and from the English rendering published as *Events at the Court of Ranjit Singh*; the Persian has not been examined. The closing formula *zabani Khushhal Singh khabardar nawishtah shud* and its translation are as given in that catalogue literature, and the identification of the informant as Jamadar Khushal Singh, the *deorhi* officer, is the editors'. That identification carries weight in the argument above and should be verified before it is relied on further; the same Khushal Singh appears elsewhere in this study declining the grant of Pakpattan.

The Akhbar Ludhiana. Its establishment in November 1834 under the British North-West Frontier Agency, its Persian language, its printing at the American Missionary Press and later at the Pashauri Mall Press from June 1841, its cessation about three years afterwards, its expansion from four to eight pages, its small circulation, its focus on the Lahore court and on the Maharaja's treatment of soldiers, law enforcement and revenue collection, and its avoidance of the activities of the British political agencies at Ludhiana and Ambala, are all reported from the Sikh reference literature summarising the paper. No file of the *Akhbar Ludhiana* has been examined for this study, and the characterisation of what it omitted rests on that summary rather than on a page-by-page reading; it is the single claim in this module that most needs checking against the paper itself, because the argument leans on it.

Ranjit Singh's illiteracy is universally attested in the contemporary and reference literature and is not contested. The account of his orders being spoken in Punjabi, transcribed into Persian by a *munshi* and double-sealed is carried forward from Module 3, with the provenance recorded there. The composition and training of the Lahore secretariat is carried forward from Module 4.

Cunningham's career and its ending. The outline of his service — Wade's assistant from 1837, the Auckland–Ranjit Singh interview of 1838, the Khyber in 1839, Ludhiana from 1840, the Jammu mission of 1841, political officer with the army in 1845–46 — follows the *DNB* and the standard biographical literature. That Hardinge prevailed on J. W. Kaye to write a rebutting review in the *Calcutta Review*, and that the resulting controversy ran through the nineteenth century with Cunningham cast as an apologist for the Khalsa, is reported from the Sikh reference literature and from the general historiography; the *Calcutta Review* article has not been consulted for this

study, and readers wishing to weigh the rebuttal should go to it rather than to any summary, including this one. The substance of Cunningham's charge — that Lal Singh and Tej Singh were in communication with the British during the war — is his, is stated here as his claim, and is not adopted by this study in advance of the module that will have to examine the war itself.

MODULE 8

Or to a Total Stranger

The default — why a hierarchy in which every position depended on one man's favour produced, within four years of his death, four dead sovereigns, two murdered wazirs and an army that governed the state itself.

What this module is looking for

The orders that last a long time are not the ones held together by loyalty, and they are certainly not the ones held together by agreement. They are the ones arranged so that a man defending his own position is, without intending it and often without noticing it, defending the whole arrangement.

That is the default. It does not require anybody to like anybody. A magistrate who wants his son to succeed him defends the rules of succession to magistracies; a landholder who wants his estate secure defends the courts that secure estates; a merchant with a charter defends the authority that issued charters. None of them is thinking about the order. Each is thinking about himself, and the order is what gets defended as a by-product, from a hundred directions at once, by people who would not cross the street for one another.

Where the property holds, the arrangement runs itself and can absorb a bad king, a lost war or a disputed succession, because the men underneath go on doing the only thing that protects them. Where it fails, the arrangement runs on whatever is holding it up directly, and lasts exactly as long as that.

And the fracture, when it comes, comes from a specific place: a group that has standing and means, and has stopped benefiting. Not the poor, who have neither. Not the contented, who have both. The dangerous combination is a body of men who can still act and who have worked out that acting is now better for them than not.

So this module goes through the Lahore hierarchy stratum by stratum and asks one question of each: **was this man's position best defended by defending the arrangement?**

The answer, in every case, is no. And the reason turns out to lie not in what any of them received but in the terms on which they held it.

The clause underneath everything

Ranjit Singh paid his elite in *jagirs* — assignments of the revenue of specified villages. The scale was enormous; the previous modules have set out the figures, the horsemen quotas and the individual valuations. What matters here is a point of law that runs beneath all of it.

A *jagir* was a life estate. On the death of the holder it reverted to the ruler, and the re-granting of it lay in the ruler's sole discretion: he might give it back to the dead man's heirs, or to one of them, or to a total stranger. Nothing obliged him to any of these. And resumption did not have to wait for a death — an assignment could be, and repeatedly was, taken back from a living man who had fallen out of favour.

Ranjit Singh's grants, on the pattern he took from the Mughals, came in two parts: one assignment in lieu of the holder's own salary, and a second to pay for the cavalry he was required to maintain. He inspected those contingents strictly, and he revived a Mughal device to do it — the *dagh*, the branding of the horses, so that an officer could not hire animals for a muster and return them afterwards.

Hold that image, because it is the module in one instrument. A ruler who must brand every horse in his elite's stables is a ruler who knows that his elite's interests and his own do not coincide, and has decided to close the gap by personal enforcement. There is nothing wrong with that as a technique; it worked for forty years. But an arrangement that has to be audited is by definition an arrangement in which compliance is not what the participants would choose. It runs on the auditor.

Now take the legal position and run it forward to the morning of 27 June 1839, when the auditor died.

Every *jagirdar* in the kingdom woke up holding an asset that had just become void and would be re-granted at the discretion of whoever ended up on the *masnad*. Not one of them held anything his son would take by right. Not one of them could protect his family by protecting an institution, because no institution guaranteed his family anything. The only thing that could protect a man in that position was standing well with the next grantor — and if the identity of the next grantor was in doubt, the only thing that could protect him was **determining who it would be**.

That is the anti-default, stated as a rule rather than as a story. A hereditary, irresumable holding makes a man defend the law, because the law is what will still be there when he is not. A resumable assignment makes a man defend a face. And at a succession, faces are exactly what is in dispute.

The stratum that had lost

Take the Sikh sardars first, because they are the group the framework says to watch: standing and means, and a benefit going the wrong way.

The Attariwalas, the Majithias, the Sandhanwalias and the rest of the old Majha families had everything a fracture needs. Their standing was as high as any in the Punjab — old Khalsa lineages, kinship networks running through every village that supplied the army, names that meant something at Amritsar. Their means were real: estates, contingents, and commands in the field. Sham Singh Attariwala had been a general for thirty years.

And their position had been going down for four decades. Their grandfathers had been sovereign; they were grantees on terms. They had been outbid at court by a Dogra Rajput family from Jammu whose founder had entered service as a common trooper and whose son now held the wazirate. The Sandhanwalias were Ranjit Singh's own collateral kin — Sukerchakias, the same descent as the royal house — and they had watched outsiders take the offices that in any ordinary dynastic arrangement would have been theirs.

What did defending their own position require, after June 1839? Not defending the arrangement, which had been steadily reducing them. Recovering position, which meant getting hold of the succession.

They did exactly that. Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia served as chief minister to Chand Kaur during her regency because a weak regent left him more power than a strong king would. On 15 September 1843 he came to Sher Singh at the Shah Bilawal garden with a new shotgun and asked him to inspect it, shot him, and cut off his head with a sword. His kinsman Lehna Singh Sandhanwalia killed the wazir Dhian Singh the same day. Sham Singh Attariwala and Jawahar Singh ran down Hira Singh in December 1844 and killed him.

None of that is disloyalty in the ordinary sense. These were men whose formation, if it inclined them to anything, inclined them to the Khalsa and its state; Sham Singh Attariwala would die in the front rank at Sobraon rather than leave the field. It is that the arrangement had left them a position they could only improve by breaking it.

The stratum that had won

Now the Dogras, who are the more instructive case, because they were the arrangement's greatest beneficiaries and it made no difference.

Gulab Singh, Dhian Singh and Suchet Singh had received, from nothing, five contiguous hill territories, four hundred horsemen of their own, a Raja's title, the

wazirate held by Dhian Singh for twenty-one years, Jasrota for Hira Singh, and a marriage into the Katoch house of Kangra. On any accounting of who did best out of Ranjit Singh's Punjab, they did.

And every item of it was held from Ranjit Singh personally, on terms resumable at pleasure, by men whose claim rested on nothing else. They had no Khalsa standing — they were Hindu Rajputs from Jammu, outside the initiation, outside the robe, with no kin in the Majha villages. They had no ancient lineage in the Punjab plains. They had no independent constituency. What they had was one man's favour, converted into land.

So when the favour's source died, what defended the Dogra position? Not the arrangement, which contained nothing that guaranteed them anything. Controlling the *masnad*, and controlling it continuously.

The record between 1839 and 1844 is the record of that strategy being executed.

Kharak Singh succeeded in June 1839 with Dhian Singh as wazir. In October his confidant Chet Singh Bajwa was killed in his presence, the Maharaja was stripped of authority, and his son Nau Nihal Singh took over. Kharak Singh died on 5 November 1840, poison widely suspected. On the way back from his father's cremation the same day, Nau Nihal Singh was killed when an archway of the Lahore fort gave way; Gulab Singh's son Udham Singh died with him; Dhian Singh sealed the fort and kept the news controlled. Griffin, compiling the Punjab families twenty-five years later from their own papers, noted the mystery around the prince's deathbed and did not resolve it.

Chand Kaur claimed the regency; Sher Singh took Lahore in January 1841 with the army behind him; Chand Kaur was pensioned and then killed. Sher Singh, according to the court chronicler Sohan Lal Suri, had abortifacients administered to Nau Nihal Singh's widows so that no posthumous heir could appear. Then September 1843 removed Sher Singh and Dhian Singh together, and within a day Dhian Singh's son Hira Singh had turned the army against the Sandhanwalias, destroyed them, taken the fort, and installed a five-year-old.

Four sovereigns and two wazirs in four years, and at every stage the men doing the arranging were acting rationally. Their positions were resumable and their claim was personal, so their positions were only as secure as their grip on whoever did the granting. Nothing in the arrangement rewarded them for leaving it alone.

The end of the sequence proves the point in the other direction. In 1846, with the kingdom beaten, Gulab Singh negotiated for the British and came out of it with Kashmir, purchased for seventy-five lakhs, and a dynasty that ruled it for a century. The

position was defended perfectly. The arrangement was not defended at all, and there was never a moment at which defending it would have been the better move.

The stratum with nothing to lose either way

The third group is the one the study finds most quietly damning, and it is the civil administration.

The Lahore secretariat — the twelve *daftars*, the treasury, the accounts, the Persian correspondence — was staffed by Brahmin and Khatri families whose training came out of Mughal and Kabul service. Bhawani Das came from Kabul in 1808 and built the treasury. Ganga Ram came in 1813. Dina Nath came in 1815 and by the end of the reign was the man who understood the accounts.

Ask the question of him. What did defending Dina Nath's position require?

It required being indispensable to whoever was governing. Nothing else. His competence was portable: a man who can run a revenue establishment in Persian is useful to a Sikh maharaja, to a Dogra wazir, to a regent, to an army committee, and to a British Resident. And that is precisely the sequence he served. He served Ranjit Singh, then Kharak Singh, then Nau Nihal Singh, then Sher Singh, then the regency of Dalip Singh, then the Council of Regency under the Resident — and after the annexation the British rewarded him.

There is no reproach in that. He did his job well for thirty-five years through a period in which most men at the top of that court were murdered. The structural observation is the one that matters: **at no point in three and a half decades did defending his position require the Sikh state to survive.** The men who kept the accounts had every reason to keep accounts and no reason at all to keep this particular government.

The European officers are the same finding in a cruder form. Allard died in 1839. Ventura, Court and Avitabile — the men who had built the *Fauj-i-Khas* and the artillery and governed Peshawar — left in the early 1840s, taking their savings with them. That is the cleanest revealed preference in the entire study: highly paid professionals with excellent information about the state's prospects, who possessed a genuine exit and used it.

The stratum that worked out what it was owed

Which leaves the group that actually inherited the Punjab, and it was created by the arrangement's central instrument.

An earlier module established the trade Ranjit Singh made. The confederate floor had been a market in violence: a horseman could ride to a rival by nightfall, so no chief could give an order his men would resent. Ranjit Singh abolished that exit by removing the destination — by making his the only payroll in the Punjab. And this study entered the debt at the time: **twelve chiefs holding twelve heritable shares cannot combine, because each has something different to lose and each is the others' rival for it. Seventy thousand men drawing the same wage from the same treasury have exactly one interest, and it is identical for all of them.**

The bill was presented between 1841 and 1845.

The Khalsa army developed *panchayats* — elected committees, one to a regiment, deliberating and coordinating between units. They had a language ready made for it: the assembly of the Khalsa, the resolution taken in the presence of the scripture, the doctrine that sovereignty belonged to the Panth and not to any man. The coin agreed with them; it had never carried a ruler's name. When the army proclaimed Dalip Singh in September 1843 it was doing something the robe fully authorised.

By 1844 and 1845 the *panchayats* were meeting daily and running the state. They enhanced their own pay. They summoned the wazir Jawahar Singh — the Maharani's own brother — before them, tried him for the killing of a prince, and executed him in front of her. They approved his successor. They sent thirty-five thousand men to Jammu to bring back Gulab Singh in custody.

Ask the question of them. What did defending a sepoy's position require? Not defending the arrangement — the arrangement was what had left his pay a year in arrears. It required controlling the treasury. And unlike every other group in this hierarchy, they had the means to do it directly rather than through a faction.

That is the fracture the framework predicts, arriving from exactly where it predicts: a body with standing — they were the Khalsa, and the state's own coin said the Khalsa was sovereign — and with means, seventy thousand men and a hundred and eighty-eight guns, which had stopped benefiting.

The controlled experiment, forty miles south

Before drawing the conclusion it is worth checking whether any of this was avoidable, or whether it is simply what Indian states did. The Punjab supplies its own control, and it is the same one that appeared when this study examined the coinage.

South of the Sutlej, Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Kaithal were ruled by Sikh Jat chiefs of exactly the same descent, religion, initiation and century as the men north of the river. By the treaty of 1809 their positions were guaranteed by an external power, and — this is the operative difference — guaranteed as **hereditary**. A Patiala chief held something

his son would take by right, secured by an authority that would still exist after he was dead.

Patiala, Nabha and Jind survived until 1947. Across the same hundred and forty years in which the Lahore kingdom killed four sovereigns in four years and then ceased to exist, the cis-Sutlej states produced no comparable sequence of murdered rulers and assassinated ministers.

The men were the same. What differed was the tenure. North of the Sutlej a chief's position depended on the life of one man and could be resumed at his pleasure; south of it, it depended on a rule and passed to his heir. Where the position was secured by a rule, defending the position meant defending the rule — which is the default doing its work, in the least sentimental way imaginable, in a set of states nobody would call admirable.

Reading the default against the framework

Three contributions, of which the first is the one this module was written to establish.

The default property is created by the *tenure* of a position, not by its value — and the operative question is whether the position outlives its holder by rule or by grace. The collection has tended to read co-optation by size: how much was granted, to how many, and what was demanded in return. This case shows that a very large grant can generate no defensive interest whatever, while a modest one held by inheritance generates a great deal.

The mechanism is simple once stated. What a man defends is what protects his family after him. Where his position passes to his son by rule, the rule is the asset, and he will defend the whole apparatus that makes rules stick — the courts, the succession, the treaties, the state. Where his position reverts at his death and is re-granted at the discretion of whoever is in charge, then the *grantor* is the asset, and at a succession the rational move is not to preserve the institution but to determine who does the granting next. Every man in that position becomes, at the moment of the ruler's death, a participant in the succession struggle whether he wants to be or not.

The test to apply elsewhere: **for each stratum of a hierarchy, ask not what it receives but on what terms it holds, and specifically whether the holding survives the holder by rule or by grace. Where it survives by grace, the arrangement has no default however generous it is, and the death of the grantor converts the entire elite into claimants simultaneously.** The Lahore kingdom is an unusually clean demonstration because the grantor's death can be dated to a morning and the disintegration began within four months.

The tell is inspection. An arrangement possessing the default property does not need to verify its elite's compliance, because compliance is what each member would choose anyway. Where the sovereign is found personally auditing the performance of his own great men — counting contingents, resuming estates from the living, and in this case reviving the Mughal practice of branding the horses so that a *jagirdar* could not hire animals for the muster — the arrangement is running on his attention rather than on their interest, and its lifespan is his.

This is a diagnostic that can be applied without knowing anything about outcomes, which is what makes it worth having. The *dagh* was reintroduced somewhere in the middle of the reign, decades before anybody died. It was visible at the time. It said, to anyone reading it correctly, that the men holding the state's cavalry would cheat on their obligations if unwatched — which is another way of saying that their interests and the state's had already diverged, in the years of the kingdom's greatest apparent strength.

And a third form of non-default: portable competence. The collection has two categories for a stratum that will not defend an arrangement — the group that has been demoted, and the group whose gains are personal to a patron. This case supplies a third, and it is the least dramatic and possibly the most common.

Where a state's administrative capacity is held by men whose training was not the state's and whose skills transfer intact to any successor, the state has bought service without buying a constituency. Dina Nath ran the Lahore accounts through Ranjit Singh, four successors, a regency, a Resident and an annexation, and was rewarded at the end by the power that had destroyed his employer. He defended his own position flawlessly for thirty-five years, and defending it never once required the Sikh state to exist. That follows directly from a finding two modules back: the Lahore state formed nobody, and hired the products of the schooling of the order it had overthrown. **A ruler who does not form his own administrators acquires an administration with no stake in him**, and the absence of the stake is invisible until the moment it is needed.

Add the three together and the picture of this hierarchy is complete and, in retrospect, was legible in advance. The men with the oldest standing had been demoted and could only rise by breaking the succession. The men with the greatest gains held them from a face and could only keep them by controlling the next face. The men who ran the machinery could serve anybody and did. The professionals with an exit took it. And the seventy thousand men whose exit had been deliberately abolished, and who held the state's own robe more legitimately than any of the claimants, discovered that they were the only party who could take the treasury directly.

Nobody in the Lahore hierarchy was defending the arrangement, because for nobody in it was that the way to defend himself.

A note on sources. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module. The phrase used as its title paraphrases the standard legal description of *jagir* tenure — that the grant reverted to the ruler on the holder's death and that re-granting lay in the ruler's sole discretion, whether to the heirs, to one of them, or to a stranger — which is stated in substantially those terms across the reference and Indian case-law literature on *jagirs*, and is not the language of any single document consulted here. The *sanads* of individual Lahore grants have not been examined for this study; they are held within the Khalsa Darbar Records and would settle the question of resumability far better than the general doctrine does. This is the module's principal evidential weakness and is stated as one: the argument rests on the general law of *jagir* tenure being applicable at Lahore, which the pattern of resumptions strongly supports but which no grant instrument has been read here to confirm.

Reported from modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. That Ranjit Singh's *jagirdars* received two assignments, one in lieu of salary and one for the maintenance of their cavalry, on the Mughal *mansabdar* pattern, and that he inspected the contingents strictly and revived the Mughal practice of branding horses to prevent evasion, is reported from the standard encyclopaedia literature on his reign; the *dagh* detail carries real weight in this module's argument and should be traced to its source in the Persian records before it is used further. For the composition of the Lahore secretariat, the careers of Bhawani Das, Ganga Ram and Dina Nath, and Dina Nath's employment by the British after 1849, the doctoral literature on the Lahore Darbar working from the Khalsa Darbar Records, at second hand. For the terms of the Dogra grants, the horsemen quotas and the sequence of their acquisitions, see Module 2 of this study and the sources recorded there.

The succession sequence. The dates and events of 1839 to 1845 — Ranjit Singh's death on 27 June 1839; the killing of Chet Singh Bajwa and Kharak Singh's displacement on 8 October 1839; Kharak Singh's death and Nau Nihal Singh's on 5 November 1840; Chand Kaur's regency and Sher Singh's accession in January 1841; the killing of Sher Singh and Dhian Singh on 15 September 1843 and the proclamation of Dalip Singh on 16 September; the killing of Hira Singh and Pandit Jalla on 21 December 1844; the execution of Jawahar Singh by the army *panchayats* in September 1845; and Lal Singh's appointment in November 1845 — follow the standard narrative and the reference literature. Several of the deaths are disputed as to cause and remain so: Kharak Singh's is widely attributed to slow poisoning and cannot be proved; the collapse of the archway that killed Nau Nihal Singh has been read both as an accident

and as a contrivance, and Griffin, compiling from the families' own papers in 1865, recorded the mystery without resolving it; this study does not resolve it either, and its argument does not require any particular answer, since a hierarchy in which four sovereigns die in four years has the same structural problem whether the causes were murder or misfortune. The report that Sher Singh had abortifacients administered to Nau Nihal Singh's widows is Sohan Lal Suri's, in the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, and is reported here at second hand from the modern literature; Suri was the Lahore court's own record-keeper, which makes the report notable, and was writing under successive regimes, which complicates it.

The army panchayats and their assumption of the government — meeting daily, enhancing the soldiery's pay, trying and executing the wazir Jawahar Singh, approving his successor, and dispatching a force to Jammu to bring in Gulab Singh — are reported from the modern literature on the period, principally the work on Maharani Jind Kaur. They are the subject of the following module of this study and are set out here only so far as the default argument requires; the evidence for how the *panchayats* were constituted, and by whom, will be examined there rather than assumed.

The cis-Sutlej comparison. That Patiala, Nabha and Jind held hereditary positions under British protection from the treaty of 1809 and survived to 1947 is not in dispute. The comparison is offered as suggestive rather than controlled: the cis-Sutlej states were small, protected, and relieved of the burden of defending a frontier, and those differences may carry part of the explanatory weight assigned here to tenure. What the comparison does establish is that the outcome at Lahore was not simply what Sikh chiefs of that century did, since chiefs of the same descent under different terms did something else.

MODULE 9

The Military Republic

Plurality or foreclosure — an assembly that narrowed from every initiated man to a handful of chiefs and then to nothing, the five years in which it reopened at the bottom from five elected delegates to a company, and what closed it again.

What to look for, and where liberties actually come from

A liberty is not a sentence in a document. It is a capacity somebody actually has against an apparatus that would otherwise do as it liked: to speak without being ruined, to gather without being dispersed, to petition and have the petition answered, to be tried rather than simply disposed of, and to be protected against the state itself rather than merely by it.

The question this module asks is whether any of that existed in the Sikh Punjab, and if it did, where it came from.

The answer to the second question is almost never that the ruled produced it. Peasants do not manufacture rights; they have neither the standing to demand them nor the means to enforce a bargain. What produces liberties, in the orders where they appear at all, is a fight inside the hierarchy. A faction with standing and means finds itself losing, or finds that the apex needs it badly enough to pay. Neither side wants to destroy the arrangement — that would cost both of them everything — so a concession is made instead. The concession is usually narrow, usually self-interested, and usually framed as a restoration of something ancient.

And then it stays. That is the important part. The faction that won the concession may be dead within a generation, but the concession sits there, in the record, available to be cited by the next group with a grievance. Liberties accrete as **residue** from factional fights, and a settled order is largely the sediment of a century of such bargains.

So the things to look for are these. Is there an "in" and an "out"? Where does the line fall? Did anyone below the level of nobility ever get let in — and if so, find the factional fight that did it. And when a concession was made, did it survive the fight that produced it?

The Sikh Punjab has an unusually clean answer to all of this, and the shape of the answer is not the one the tradition tells.

The claim, and what the evidence will bear

The Sikh order's own account of its constitution is the Sarbat Khalsa and the *gurmata*.

Twice a year, at Baisakhi and Diwali, the Khalsa assembled at Amritsar. After the bathing and the prayer and the distribution of *karah prasad*, the assembly sat in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib and deliberated on the matters facing the community — strategy against an invader, the choice of commanders, the disposal of conquests. When a resolution was taken it was a *gurmata*, and once it had been ratified after the *ardas* it bound everybody present, including those who had argued fiercely against it. The distinctions of caste and tribe, kept up on other occasions, were laid aside. Chiefs who had been at war with one another swore, over the scripture, to forget their quarrels.

That is a description of a genuine deliberative institution and, on the face of it, a remarkable one. It is also a description that has to be handled carefully, and the caution comes from inside the Sikh scholarship rather than from outside it.

The two European accounts everybody quotes — George Forster's of 1783 and John Malcolm's of 1805 — are, as the Sikh institutional literature itself acknowledges, dependent on second-hand reporting. Neither man appears to have watched a functioning Sarbat Khalsa deliberate and record a *gurmata*. Nearly everything else descends from the nineteenth-century Sikh chronicles. This study will therefore not treat the vivid ceremonial account as established fact, and will rest instead on the two things the record does support: that resolutions described as *gurmatas* were taken at Amritsar at datable moments and were followed by coordinated action, and that Malcolm was personally present in the Punjab for the last of them.

The first is well attested. A *gurmata* at the Akal Takht on 27 October 1761 resolved on action against Ahmad Shah's supporters. A Sarbat Khalsa after the expulsion of the Afghan viceroy in 1762 resolved on the organisation of the confederacy. Another resolved on the destruction of Zain Khan of Sirhind, who was killed on 14 January 1764, and another on the sack of Sirhind that followed. The Dal Khalsa itself was constituted by a resolution at Amritsar on Baisakhi, 29 March 1748. Something at Amritsar was producing decisions that a scattered body of armed men then executed together, and the execution is visible in the record even where the deliberation is not.

How the "in" narrowed

Now the part that matters, because it can be tracked and because it happened before Ranjit Singh laid a finger on the institution.

The assembly began wide. In its early form every Sikh present could take part in the deliberations, which in a body constituted by adult initiation meant that any initiated man — of any caste, including the castes the older order ranked lowest — had a voice at the one place all of them came to. Set beside anything else available in eighteenth-century India, that is a real and unusual thing.

It did not stay wide. As the confederacies took territory after 1765 and settled into it, the composition changed: it came to be only the *misl* chiefs, or their *vakils* — their proxies — who mattered. The men who had ridden together as equals when none of them owned anything became sovereigns of separate countries, and a sovereign attends an assembly of his peers only when he needs something from them.

The mechanism is not mysterious and it is the module's first finding. **An assembly of equals is sustained by the precariousness of its members.** When a Sikh horseman's entire security consisted of the body he rode with, the assembly was the thing that kept him alive and he went to it. When he held a fort, a district and a revenue, the assembly became a cost — a journey, an obligation, and a risk of being bound to something he did not want. Attendance fell; then delegation replaced attendance; then the proxies stopped mattering too.

Malcolm watched the end of it. He was in the Punjab in 1805 when the last such assembly was called, to decide what to do about Jaswant Rao Holkar, the beaten Maratha commander who had come into the Punjab with a British army behind him. Few chiefs came. And Malcolm's observation about the ones who did not come is the single most useful sentence in the whole question: most of the absentees who had any power were bold and forward in their offers to resist any resolution the council might reach.

That is not an institution in abeyance. That is an institution whose binding power has evaporated and whose members are saying so publicly in advance. A *gurmata* works because everyone present, including the losers of the argument, is committed by the ratification. When the men with power announce beforehand that they will not be bound, the ratification is a ceremony.

The foreclosure, dated

Ranjit Singh never convened another.

There is an argument in the Sikh literature about whether he abolished the institution or whether it simply lapsed for want of an occasion — the case for the latter being that the invasions had stopped, the Punjab was consolidated, and a grand assembly of the whole community no longer had anything to convene about. That is

not a foolish argument and it contains something true: the assembly's original function was coordination against an external threat, and the threat had gone.

But the Sikh institutional literature itself supplies the other half, and it does so plainly. After 1805 Ranjit Singh did not permit the institution of *gurmata* to operate as a political organisation, because he wished to act freely without the interference of the Khalsa; he set up an absolute government and took the functions of the *gurmata* into his own hands.

Both things are true at once and neither cancels the other. The occasion for the assembly had weakened, and the man who benefited from its weakness made sure it did not recover. What can be stated without any interpretation at all is the fact: an institution that had constituted the Dal Khalsa, appointed its commanders and directed the sack of Sirhind met for the last time in 1805, and did not meet again for a hundred and twenty years.

What was left, 1805 to 1839

So what did a person in the Sikh Punjab actually have? The honest accounting is short and it should be done without either indulgence or contempt.

Protection from the state: none, as a matter of right. The clearest evidence in this study is the Kashmir fine schedule — a Sikh who killed a native paid the government sixteen to twenty rupees, of which the family received four if the dead man was Hindu and two if he was Muslim. Whatever else that document is, it is not the record of a subject with standing against the apparatus.

Petition: real, and held as grace. The Maharaja heard complaints and acted on them; the collection of his Persian orders contains instructions granting lenient terms to villages ruined by the rivers, and remissions where a district could not pay. That is redress, and it mattered to the people who got it. It was also entirely at his discretion, unappealable, and available only to those who could reach him — which is to say it was the opposite of a right, being precisely what a right is designed to replace.

Assembly and self-government at the bottom: substantial, and not the state's doing. The village *panchayat* went on allocating the revenue burden among the co-sharers, settling disputes and managing the common land, exactly as it had under the Mughals and before them. The Sikh state left it entirely alone. But an institution the state did not create and does not guarantee is not a liberty against the state; it is a space the state has not bothered to enter, and it lasts as long as the not-bothering does.

Religion: plural in what was funded, unprotected in what was permitted. The state endowed Sikh shrines, Hindu temples and Muslim shrines and mosques alike out of the same revenue; it left Muslim personal law to the *qazis*. It also, in Kashmir,

prohibited the call to prayer, closed the Jama Masjid at Srinagar and made cow-slaughter capital — measures repealed only in the last years of Sikh rule by a Muslim governor — and Malcolm recorded in the Punjab of 1805 that Muslims were forbidden to pray aloud and that few of their mosques had escaped destruction. Both halves are documented and they are not in contradiction. A state can be generous in what it endows and arbitrary in what it allows, because endowment and permission are different instruments.

Speech against a chief: available, and held by a stratum rather than by persons. The Akalis at Amritsar could denounce a chief, fine him, and bar him from the shrine, and — as Malcolm noted — could see to it that a chief out of favour found his own dependants taught that resisting him was pious. That is a real counter-lever and it was aimed upward. It belonged to the men who held the seat, not to anybody else, and it had no procedure, no appeal and no limit.

Add it up and the position between 1805 and 1839 is: a competently governed, comparatively lightly taxed country with no institution whatever standing between a subject and the government, and one channel of criticism running through a body of armed devotees at a shrine.

The reopening

And then, for five years, something else happened, and it is the most interesting thing in this study.

The mechanism is exactly the one the framework predicts, and it can be traced step by step.

Ranjit Singh died in June 1839. Within eighteen months the succession was in open dispute: Chand Kaur claiming the regency for an unborn grandson, Sher Singh claiming the throne, the Dogras manoeuvring behind both. Neither faction could win without the army. So they bid for it. Sher Singh won the throne in January 1841 by promising the soldiery monetary rewards, and he took Lahore with the army behind him.

He could not pay. The promises were beyond the treasury, and the pay — which had habitually run a year or more into arrears even in Ranjit Singh's lifetime — fell further behind. Charging the government with bad faith, soldiers whose wages were months overdue went on the rampage in Lahore, and the disorder spread to the provinces.

What they did next is the thing. They did not simply riot, and they did not simply desert. They organised, and they organised on the model every one of them had grown up inside.

Each company elected five delegates. Each battalion, each regiment, and in the artillery each *dera*, had its own *panchayat* — a committee of the elected. Together the committees formed a council, and the council called itself the Sarbat Khalsa.

Consider what that means. Sepoys drawing something under eight rupees a month, from villages in the Majha and the Doaba, reached for the institution their own villages used to divide a revenue demand and their own tradition said had constituted the Dal Khalsa — and reconstituted it from the bottom. They declared that Guru Gobind Singh's ideal of the Sikh commonwealth had been revived, with the whole body of the Khalsa assuming executive, military and civil authority in the state.

And the coin agreed with them. It had never carried a ruler's name; it said that sovereignty was Nanak's and Gobind Singh's and that the state was the Sarkar Khalsa. When the army proclaimed the five-year-old Dalip Singh sovereign on 16 September 1843, it was doing something the order's own robe fully authorised, and nobody could produce a document saying otherwise.

What they did with it

The *panchayats* went dormant after their first outburst in 1841 and revived in force after the killing of the wazir Hira Singh in December 1844. From 1845 they met daily and ran the state, and the record of what they did is not the record of a mob.

They raised the soldiery's pay — which was, after all, the grievance, and no one should be surprised that a body of wage-earners given power over a treasury voted itself the arrears.

They exercised jurisdiction over the highest officers in the kingdom. In September 1845 the wazir Jawahar Singh — brother of the Maharani, uncle of the Maharaja — was summoned before them, charged with the killing of Prince Pashaura Singh, and executed in front of his sister. Whatever else that was, it was a wazir being tried by a body of soldiers rather than assassinated in a corridor, which is what had happened to every other minister since 1839.

They approved his successor: early in November 1845 the Maharani nominated Lal Singh to the wazirship *with the approval of the Khalsa Council*, and the formula is worth noticing, because it means the court had accepted that the appointment required their consent.

They dispatched a force reported at thirty-five thousand men to Jammu to bring in Gulab Singh, the most powerful chief in the kingdom, who was charged with treason and brought back in custody.

And they kept order. George Campbell, a British civilian serving in the cis-Sutlej territory — that is, an official of the government about to go to war with them —

recorded in his memoirs that the *panches* who had taken the affairs of the Lahore forces into their own hands maintained, in his words, *wonderful order at Lahore* and *almost puritanical discipline in the military republic*.

That is testimony from the other side of the frontier, from a man with every professional reason to describe the Punjab as anarchic, that a state run by elected soldiers' committees was running well.

The British view of the institution itself was less admiring and is worth having for what it reveals about the observers. They called it the dangerous military democracy of the *panchayat* system; they described the soldiers as being in a state of successful mutiny; and when the *panchayats* and the court began working together they called it an unholy alliance between the republican army and the Darbar.

Successful mutiny. The adjective is the confession. A failed mutiny is a police matter; a successful one is a constitution, and the men across the Sutlej knew the difference.

Two cautions before the conclusion

The first is textual. Sohan Lal Suri, the Lahore court's own diarist and the closest contemporary witness available, does not use the word *panchayat*. He refers to the army's representatives variously as Singhs, as the Khalsa, as *panches*, as officers of the *paltans*, or collectively as *Khalsa ji*. The organised, five-delegates-per-company account comes to us through the later historiography and through British reporting. Something was unmistakably there — Suri records it acting — but the tidiness of the constitutional description should be treated as reconstruction, and the comparison sometimes made to the Russian soviets of 1917 is an analogy imposed afterwards rather than a finding.

The second is about who was in it. This was a body of Khalsa soldiers, and the state's army was roughly sixty per cent Sikh in the infantry and cavalry — with the artillery, as this study has noted, predominantly Muslim. Whether Muslim and Hindu gunners elected *panches* and sat in the councils is not established by anything examined here, and the language the institution used about itself — the Sarbat Khalsa, the commonwealth of Guru Gobind Singh — suggests the boundary of the "in" was the boundary of the Khalsa. If so, then the reopening let in men below nobility and did not let in the majority of the country. That would make it the same "in" as the eighteenth century's, restored at the bottom, and not a wider one.

What closed it

It lasted five years and it was not defeated.

In December 1845 the Lahore army crossed the Sutlej and the First Anglo-Sikh War began. It ended in March 1846 with the Punjab beaten, indemnified, garrisoned by a British force, and administered under a Resident.

And on the account of the British political officer who was in the field for the whole of it, the army was beaten because the two men at the top of it — the wazir Lal Singh and the commander-in-chief Tej Singh — were in communication with the enemy. That is Cunningham's charge, published in 1849; his government removed him from the political service for making it, on the stated ground that he had disclosed documents known to him only in his confidential capacity; and this study has already noted what that form of rebuttal concedes.

If Cunningham was right — and this study will have to weigh it properly in the module that examines the war — then the closing sentence of the Punjab's five years of soldiers' government is this: the men whom the elected councils had approved to the two highest offices in the kingdom used those offices to destroy the army that had approved them. Lal Singh was made wazir in November 1845 with the approval of the Khalsa Council. Six weeks later he was leading its army across the Sutlej.

Reading liberty against the framework

Three contributions.

The liberty was extracted from below in composition and conceded from above in cause — and the auction is what made it possible. Nothing the sepoys of the Khalsa army did in 1841 could have succeeded against a unified apex. What made it succeed was that there was no apex: Chand Kaur, Sher Singh, the Dogras and later the Maharani were bidding against one another, each needed the army more than any of them needed the precedent, and each therefore paid in the only currency the army would take, which was money it could not deliver and then authority it could not withhold.

That is the collection's standing account of where liberties come from, confirmed in a case with unusually sharp dates. The concession was not a gift and not a victory; it was the by-product of a competition among people who all wanted it not to happen.

And the durability of such a concession is the durability of the competition that produced it. This is the refinement this module offers, and it comes from watching a liberty appear and vanish inside five years.

A concession wrung from a divided hierarchy becomes a *liberty* only when it acquires an anchor independent of the fight that produced it — a text that can be cited, a court that will enforce it, a body with a separate revenue, a foreign guarantor. Where

it has no such anchor, it is not a right but a **position in an ongoing auction**, and it lasts exactly as long as there are competing bidders.

The Punjab's soldiers' councils had no anchor. They had no charter, no revenue of their own, no external guarantor, no court, and no institution outside the army that recognised them. What they had was four factions who all needed them. When the war removed the factions — by beating them, indemnifying them and installing a Resident over them — the councils did not have to be abolished. There was simply nobody left to bid, and they ceased.

The form to test: **where a concession is extracted in a factional auction, ask what would happen to it if the factions stopped competing — and where the answer is that nothing would remain, the concession is a price and not a right, however constitutional its language.** The corollary explains why residue accumulates in some orders and not others: one auction leaves a bargain, and a bargain lapses. What produces a constitution is auctions *recurring*, for long enough that each new faction finds it cheaper to cite the last concession than to fight over it afresh. The Punjab had one auction, over five years, and then the bidding stopped for good.

And the "in" narrows by territorial settlement, not by tyranny. The Sarbat Khalsa was at its widest when its members owned nothing: any initiated man present could deliberate, in a body constituted by adult choice rather than birth. It narrowed to chiefs, then to chiefs' proxies, then to nothing — and the decisive movement happened between 1765 and 1799, before the monarchy existed, driven by the fact that each member had acquired a country of his own.

Ranjit Singh's part was real and should not be excused: he took the functions of the assembly into his own hands and did not call another. But he was foreclosing an institution that had already stopped binding, and the evidence is Malcolm's, from the last meeting, where the powerful absentees were openly announcing in advance that they would not be bound by whatever was decided.

The general form: **an assembly of equals is sustained by the precariousness of its members, and dissolves when each acquires a separately defensible position** — because at that point attendance becomes a cost, delegation becomes a substitute for attendance, and the binding force of a collective resolution becomes a claim nobody has to honour. Where the collection finds a deliberative body among armed peers, it should date the moment those peers acquired individual territory, and expect the assembly's real death to precede its formal abolition by a generation.

Which leaves the last observation, and it is the one worth carrying out of this module. The widest participation in the Sikh order's whole hundred years came at the two moments when the men involved had least: in the 1740s, when the Khalsa was a

body of hunted men with nothing but each other, and in the 1840s, when the army was a body of unpaid men whose officers were murdering each other. Both times the institution was the same, and both times it was called the Sarbat Khalsa. On the evidence of this case, the assembly of equals is not what an order builds when it is strong. It is what men reach for when nothing else is holding them up.

A note on sources. The one quotation is from George Campbell, *Memoirs of My Indian Career* — the *panches* maintaining wonderful order at Lahore and almost puritanical discipline in the military republic — reported here at second hand from the Sikh reference literature and not collated with the printed memoir, which was published posthumously in 1893 and is in the public domain. Campbell was a civilian in the Company's service in the cis-Sutlej territory at the time he describes, which is what gives the testimony its weight. John Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs* (1812) is drawn on again for the assembly of 1805 and for the Akalis, with the provenance recorded in earlier modules; his account of the *gurmata*'s ceremonial is second-hand and is treated as such here, while his report of the 1805 meeting and of the absentees' openly declared refusal to be bound is his own observation from the Punjab in that year, and is the strongest evidence in this module.

Reported at second hand, and flagged. The British characterisations — the dangerous military democracy of the *panchayat* system, the soldiers in a state of successful mutiny, the unholy alliance between the republican army and the Darbar — recur across the Sikh reference literature as quotations from contemporary British reporting, but have not been traced here to the despatches or publications they came from; they are used as reported phrases and the argument does not turn on their exact wording. The constitution of the *panchayats* — five delegates elected by each company, a committee in each battalion, regiment and artillery *dera*, and a council of the committees calling itself the Sarbat Khalsa — comes from the modern Sikh encyclopaedic and doctoral literature. As noted in the module, Sohan Lal Suri's contemporary *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* does not use the word *panchayat* and refers to the army's representatives by several other terms; the organised constitutional description is therefore a reconstruction, and readers should treat the five-delegate detail as the historiography's rather than as documented.

Contested, and left contested. Whether Ranjit Singh abolished the Sarbat Khalsa or whether it lapsed for want of occasion is disputed within the Sikh literature, and both positions are represented above. What is not disputed is the date of the last assembly, 1805, its subject, Jaswant Rao Holkar, and the fact that none was called again until 1925. The reading that he set up an absolute government and took the *gurmata*'s

functions into his own hands because he wished to act without the Khalsa's interference is taken from Sikh institutional scholarship, not from a hostile source.

Figures and events. The growth of the army from about twenty-nine thousand with a hundred and ninety-two guns in 1839 to over eighty thousand by 1845 is reported from the general literature and is not straightforwardly reconcilable with the Khalsa Darbar figures used earlier in this study — Kohli's compilation gives 70,721 for 1845 — the discrepancy probably turning on what is counted as regular; it is left unresolved rather than smoothed. The trial and execution of Jawahar Singh, the appointment of Lal Singh with the Khalsa Council's approval, the force sent to Jammu against Gulab Singh, and the proclamation of Dalip Singh on 16 September 1843 follow the modern literature on the period, principally the work on Maharani Jind Kaur, and are set out with their provenance in the preceding module. Cunningham's charge against Lal Singh and Tej Singh is his, is stated here as his, and is not adopted by this study in advance of the module that examines the war.

The framework material. The account of liberties as residue accreting from factional bargains within a hierarchy, rather than as concessions won by the ruled, is the collection's own, and this module tests it rather than restates it.

MODULE 10

Seventy-Five Lakhs

Change and collapse — six years of fracture before a shot was fired at the British, an army that tripled in size because every faction was bidding for it, and the price at which a province and its people passed between two hierarchies.

The test this case was always going to be

The collection holds a hard proposition about how orders change: that structural change never comes from the ruled, because a settlement is an armed arrangement and can only be altered by those who command organised force. The ruled are present at every opening — as soldiers, as crowds, as the weight one broken faction swings against another — but they are never the agent that makes the opening. Floors crack in four ways, all of them at the top: the elite *fractures* and one faction arms the people against the other; the elite *exhausts* itself and must pay the survivors; the elite is *conquered* by a rival elite; or the elite *overbreeds*, producing more claimants than it has seats, and the surplus turns revolutionary and leads the crowd as fuel.

This case is a good test because it is unusually clean. The Sikh order held for fifty years and then came apart inside ten, in a country whose subjects had every conceivable grievance and never once rose.

Start with the negative evidence, because it is the strongest part of the argument and it has already been gathered. Kashmir was taxed to depopulation, its Jama Masjid closed and the call to prayer banned, and a Kashmiri's life priced at two rupees in a written schedule. The Kashmiris walked over the Pir Panjal in hundreds and did not rise. The Punjab's Muslim majority — better than half the country, addressed by no part of the order's account of itself, formed by nobody the state controlled — never rose either, in fifty years. The peasantry of the Doabs, paying up to half the crop, did not rise. The shawl-weavers did not rise; they emigrated and set up their looms in Amritsar.

At no point between 1799 and 1849 did anything resembling a popular rising threaten the Lahore state. The order was destroyed entirely from above, and the sequence in which it happened runs through all four cracks in order, each one making the next possible.

The fracture, and how the door was opened from inside

The elite split in June 1839 and the split ran for six years before a shot was fired at a British soldier. That sequence — four sovereigns, two murdered wazirs, five factions — has been set out in this study already. What matters here is the *mechanism* by which the split reached downward, because it is the textbook case of the first crack.

The framework's claim is that the crowd does not force the door; a faction of the elite, fighting a rival faction, opens the door from the inside and invites the crowd through, because the crowd's numbers are useful in a war the elite cannot win alone. Watch it happen four times.

In January 1841 Sher Singh could not take Lahore from Chand Kaur's regency without the army, so he bought it — with promises of monetary reward, made in the knowledge that the treasury could not meet them — and marched in behind it. In September 1843, with Sher Singh and the wazir Dhian Singh both dead in a single afternoon, Hira Singh turned the army against the Sandhanwalias, destroyed them, took the fort, and had the army proclaim a five-year-old sovereign. In December 1844 the Maharani's party used troops under Sham Singh Attariwala to run down Hira Singh as he fled with the treasury on carts. And from 1845 the Maharani's own government negotiated with the *panches* as a power in its own right, because there was nobody else left to negotiate with.

Every one of those was a faction reaching down for the army in order to beat another faction. None of them intended the outcome. By 1845 the door was off its hinges and the men who had been invited through were running the state — meeting daily, raising their own pay, trying and executing the wazir, and approving his successor.

The common man was in this, and he was in it in exactly the position the framework describes. The sepoy on eight rupees a month was not the author of the fracture; the fracture was a quarrel among Ranjit Singh's sons, his widow, his collateral kin and his Dogra creations. But the sepoy was the weight all of them needed, and the price of that weight went up every time one of them bid.

The floor that overbred

Which produces this case's own contribution to the framework, and it is a variant of the fourth crack that the collection has not yet catalogued.

Elite overproduction, as Goldstone and Turchin describe it, is the manufacture of surplus *claimants to office* — educated, ambitious, credentialled men for whom there is no chair. That form is present here in the ordinary way: Ranjit Singh left sons of contested legitimacy and disputed number, collateral Sandhanwalia kinsmen with royal

blood and no seats, and a Dogra house that had been given more than any of them. One *masnad*, half a dozen claimants, and no rule of succession — because, as this study found earlier, the robe abstained from the question by construction and the coin never carried anybody's name.

But the sharper form of overproduction here happened in the floor itself.

At Ranjit Singh's death in 1839 the regular army stood at something in the region of twenty-nine thousand men with a hundred and ninety-two guns. By 1845 it was over eighty thousand — the Khalsa Darbar pay records give 70,721 for that year, and the discrepancy between the figures probably turns on what was counted as regular. Either way the force roughly tripled in six years, during which the state conquered nothing, and the reason it tripled is that landlords and their retainers took up arms and the factions kept enlisting them.

Consider why. In a succession contested among people none of whom can claim legitimacy — no dynastic principle, no assembly, no anointing, a coin that names nobody — the only currency in which a claim can be pressed is armed men. So every faction bought armed men, and the way to buy them was to put them on the payroll. The state manufactured claimants on its own treasury as the direct by-product of the fight over who would control the treasury.

And it could not pay them. Arrears of a year or more had been normal even in Ranjit Singh's lifetime; by 1845 the army cost something near a crore and twenty-eight lakhs against a revenue that had not grown and was very probably shrinking, with Kashmir farmed out and depopulating and the provinces disordered.

So the general form worth adding to the collection: **where a succession is contested among factions none of whom can claim the robe, expect the floor itself to overbreed — because in that situation soldiers are the medium of exchange, every bidder enlarges the army, and the resulting force is by construction unpayable and therefore politically active.** The soldiers' councils of 1841 to 1845 were not an outbreak of republican sentiment. They were the predictable behaviour of a body of creditors who had been enlisted by people who could not pay them.

The repricing

The second crack — exhaustion — usually arrives in the collection through defeat in a great war. Here it arrived before any war, through arithmetic, and it produced the most important transaction in the whole collapse.

The court had run out of money. It could not pay the army it had recruited, and it could not disband the army because each faction needed it against the others. What it did instead was pay in the only other thing it had.

It paid in authority. Sher Singh conceded the army's demands because he could not meet its wages. Jind Kaur's government conceded that the wazir required the Khalsa Council's approval because it had nothing else to offer. The court did not surrender power to the *panchayats* out of principle or weakness of nerve; it surrendered power because power was the only currency left in the till.

That is worth stating as a general observation, because it is not the same as the ordinary exhaustion crack and it may be commoner: **an apex that cannot pay its floor will pay it in authority instead — and authority, once paid out, cannot be recovered when the money comes back.** The Punjab's five years of soldiers' government were bought with unpaid wages, and the debt was never discharged.

There is a darker reading of what the court did next, and this study will present it and not adopt it. Some historians have held that Jind Kaur and her ministers deliberately sent the army across the Sutlej in December 1845 to have it destroyed by the British, on the calculation that a defeated army was cheaper than an unpaid one. The accusation is old, it is serious, and it is not settled; what can be said is that the outcome was exactly what such a calculation would have sought, and that the men who commanded the army in the field had, on the best contemporary account, been in communication with the enemy.

The conquest, and the charge

Which brings the study to the thing it has twice deferred.

The Lahore army crossed the Sutlej in December 1845 and fought four battles in eight weeks. At Mudki on 18 December the British won an untidy engagement with heavy losses. At Ferozeshah on the 21st and 22nd they came close to destruction — the standard accounts have the Governor-General preparing for the worst — and were saved when the Sikh commander Tej Singh, arriving with a fresh force against an exhausted enemy, withdrew instead of attacking. At Aliwal on 28 January the Sikh army was broken in the field. At Sobraon on 10 February it was destroyed: five to eight thousand Sikh dead, sixty-seven guns taken, and thousands drowned in the Sutlej when the bridge of boats behind the entrenchments failed during the retreat.

Joseph Davey Cunningham, a political officer with the army throughout, published in 1849 the claim that the two commanders — the wazir Lal Singh and the commander-in-chief Tej Singh — had been in communication with the British during the campaign, and that the army was beaten because it was betrayed. His government removed him from the political service in 1850, cut his income to about a quarter, and stated as the grounds that he had disclosed documents known to him only in his

confidential capacity. That is not a denial. It is a concession that the documents existed, said what he reported, and should not have left the file.

The study has to weigh this, and the weighing comes out in three parts.

The defensible core is that Lal Singh and Tej Singh were in communication with the British and that their battlefield conduct is not explicable as ordinary incompetence. Tej Singh's withdrawal at Ferozeshah, at the moment the British line was spent, is the pivot of the war. The modern reference literature now states the treachery flatly rather than as an allegation.

The circumstantial evidence afterwards is heavy. Lal Singh was continued as wazir under the peace and then deposed by a British commission at the end of 1846. Tej Singh was made a Raja by the British and lived until 1862 with a British-granted estate. Gulab Singh — the third man Cunningham named — spent the war communicating with both sides and committing to neither, and emerged with a kingdom. Every one of the three men named in 1849 was, in the event, either rewarded by the victors or disposed of by them, which is what one would expect of assets after they have been used.

And the strong version of the story should be held at arm's length. The account in which Tej Singh personally weakened a specific section of the pontoon bridge, and had ammunition boxes filled with sand under his own order, is the later tradition, and it has the tidiness this study has learned to distrust. Bridges of boats fail under retreating armies without anybody sabotaging them. The narrower claim does not need the embellishment and is stronger without it.

What the narrower claim establishes is the thing this module is about. The Khalsa army fought superbly. The British casualties at Ferozeshah and at Sobraon were severe enough that the Governor-General was manoeuvring to have his own commander-in-chief removed, and three years later at Chillianwala the losses were bad enough that Gough was replaced and the aura of British invincibility in India was, on the British Army's own later assessment, permanently damaged. Sham Singh Attariwala — a general of thirty years' service, from one of the old Majha families the settlement had demoted — died in the front rank at Sobraon rather than leave the field.

The men fought. They were sold by the two officers the soldiers' councils had themselves approved to the highest commands in the kingdom six weeks earlier. That is the whole relationship between the common man and structural change, in a single campaign: he supplies the courage and the bodies, and the disposal of the outcome happens above his head, among people who have already made their arrangements.

What the victors declined to take

The peace of 1846 is worth reading closely, because what the British did *not* do is more revealing than what they did.

They did not annex the Punjab. By the Treaty of Lahore in March 1846 they took an indemnity of a crore and a half, the Jullundur Doab between the Beas and the Sutlej, and a drastic reduction of the Sikh army. When it became clear the indemnity could not be paid, they took Kashmir in lieu — and then, within days, sold it on. By the Treaty of Amritsar, Gulab Singh of Jammu became independent ruler of Jammu and Kashmir on payment to the East India Company of **seventy-five lakhs of rupees**.

A province of perhaps three-quarters of a million people, with its shawl manufacture, its revenue and its history, transferred between two hierarchies for a sum, in a document, within a fortnight of the last battle. The people concerned were not consulted and are not mentioned. This is the third crack in its purest form: the contest is settled entirely between one apex and another, and the population is the territory that changes hands.

Then in December 1846, by the Treaty of Bhyrowal, the British replaced the Maharani's regency with a Council of Regency supervised by a British Resident, who became in practice the ruler of the Punjab. Jind Kaur was removed, confined, and eventually exiled to Benares.

Note the shape of it. Indemnity, a doab, a province sold on to a collaborator, the army cut, a Resident installed — and the Sikh state left formally in existence with a nine-year-old on the *masnad*. That is a conqueror taking the cheapest sufficient share. Annexation costs money: an administration, a garrison, a revenue system, responsibility for famine. A protectorate with a Resident delivers the same control at a fraction of the price, and leaves a local apparatus to do the collecting and absorb the blame.

Read a conquest's terms for what the conqueror declined to take, because it tells you what he believed he could get without paying for it. In 1846 the British believed they could have the Punjab without owning it.

The last fracture

They were wrong, and the way they were wrong closes a circle this study opened in its second module.

In April 1848 the Resident's government at Lahore required Diwan Mulraj, the governor of Multan, to pay an increased assessment and revenues in arrears. Mulraj offered to resign; two British officers, Patrick Vans Agnew and Lieutenant William

Anderson, were sent to take charge of the fortress; they were attacked on 20 April and killed the following day, their Sikh escort having gone over. Within months the Sikh troops were in open rebellion, and the old Majha sardar families — Chattar Singh Attariwala in Hazara and his son Sher Singh Attariwala in the Punjab — were in the field.

Look at the trigger. **A demand for increased assessment and arrears, made of the governor of Multan.** That is precisely the instrument this study identified in Ranjit Singh's hands thirty years earlier and named as this case's addition to the catalogue of settlement fictions: establish a tributary relation, raise the demand beyond what the holder can meet, and treat the shortfall as the occasion. Ranjit Singh had operated it on Multan in 1818, on Sahiwal in 1810, on Jhang in 1817. In 1848 the same instrument was operated at Multan by a British Resident using a Sikh Darbar as the demanding party.

The instruments outlive the state. Whoever takes the apparatus inherits its characteristic techniques and turns them on the people who built them.

The second war ran from the siege of Multan through Ramnagar in November 1848 to Chillianwala on 13 January 1849, where Gough attacked late in the day against a concealed position and suffered losses severe enough to end his career and to damage British prestige in India for a generation. Multan fell on 22 January. The decisive battle was at Gujrat on 21 February 1849, and the Sikh army surrendered at Rawalpindi shortly afterwards. Chattar Singh and Sher Singh surrendered in March, were imprisoned at Allahabad, released in 1854 and permanently exiled from the Punjab; Chattar Singh died at Calcutta in 1855 and his son at Benares three years later.

On 29 March 1849 Dalhousie annexed the Punjab. Dalip Singh, aged ten, was pensioned and taken to England. The contents of the *toshakhana* were dispersed, and the Koh-i-Noor went to Queen Victoria by way of a ceremony at which the boy was made to hand it over.

And it is worth noticing who was fighting in 1848 and who was not. The second war was led by the Attariwalas — the old Sikh sardar families whose grandfathers had been sovereign and who had been reduced by Ranjit Singh to conditional estates and then displaced at court by the Dogras. It was the demoted stratum's last attempt, and it came, as the framework says such attempts come, from men who still had standing and means. It did not come from the villages, and it did not come from Kashmir, and it did not come from the Muslim majority, who had been given no account of the Lahore state in fifty years and had no formed reason to defend it.

Reading collapse against the framework

Three contributions and one confirmation.

The confirmation first, because it is the point of the exercise. Fifty years of an order under which a Kashmiri's death was priced at two rupees, a province was taxed until its people walked out over a mountain pass, and better than half the population was addressed by nothing in the state's account of itself — and not one rising. When the order fell, it fell because Ranjit Singh's sons and widow and collateral kin and Dogra creations fought one another for six years, because the factions bought soldiers they could not pay, because the two commanders the soldiers had approved sold the army in the field, and because a rival hierarchy across the Sutlej was in a position to collect. The common man is present throughout — dying at Sobraon in thousands, sitting in the councils that ran Lahore for five years, drowning in the Sutlej when the bridge failed — and he is the author of none of it.

The addition: overproduction can occur in the floor itself, and a contested succession is its engine. The received mechanism describes an elite breeding more claimants to office than it has offices. This case shows the same dynamic operating on the *armed* rather than the credentialled. Between 1839 and 1845 the Lahore army roughly tripled while the state conquered nothing, because in a succession where no faction could claim legitimacy the only currency in which a claim could be pressed was enlisted men, and every bidder enlarged the army.

The general form: **where a succession is contested among factions none of whom can claim the robe, expect the floor to overbreed, because soldiers become the medium of exchange — and expect the resulting force to be unpayable by construction and therefore politically organised.** This joins two findings of earlier modules into one mechanism. An impersonal anchor abstains from the succession, so nobody can claim legitimacy; a resumable tenure makes every grantee a claimant at the succession; and the combination guarantees that the contest will be fought by bidding for armed men. The soldiers' councils were not an anomaly. They were the arithmetic.

The repricing runs through arrears, not only through defeat. The collection's exhaustion crack usually arrives via a lost great-power war that dissolves an army and forces the survivors to pay those who remain. Here the exhaustion was fiscal and it arrived before any war with an external power. The court could not pay the army it had recruited and could not disband it, so it paid in the only other thing it had. **An apex that cannot pay its floor pays it in authority, and authority once paid out is not recoverable when the money returns.** That transaction is the whole of what happened at Lahore between 1841 and 1845, and it is worth watching for elsewhere

precisely because it produces institutions — councils, committees, assemblies — that look like political awakening and are in fact debt instruments.

And the conqueror takes the cheapest sufficient share. In 1846 the British had beaten the Punjab in the field and did not annex it. They took an indemnity, a doab, a reduced army and a Resident, and sold Kashmir to a collaborator for seventy-five lakhs. Full ownership was purchased only in 1849, after a revolt proved that the cheap version would not hold.

The reading rule: **examine what a victor declined to take, because it records what he believed he could obtain without paying for it** — and where a conquest arrives in two stages, the second stage is the price of the first stage's optimism. And record the transaction itself. Seventy-five lakhs, in a treaty signed within a fortnight of the last battle, is what a province and its people were worth when two hierarchies settled accounts between themselves. Nobody in Kashmir was asked, and the men who had emigrated over the Pir Panjal a generation earlier to escape the Sikh farm now had a Dogra one, purchased from the British with money owed by Lahore.

A note on sources. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module. The judgement on Cunningham rests on the *Dictionary of National Biography* material quoted and sourced in Module 7 of this study, and on Cunningham's *A History of the Sikhs* (1849), which has not been read in the original here — a limitation that matters more in this module than in any other, since it is the module that weighs his charge. Anyone wishing to assess that charge properly should read his last chapter and J. W. Kaye's rebuttal in the *Calcutta Review* rather than any summary, this one included.

The military narrative. The dates, engagements and casualty figures of the two wars — Mudki on 18 December 1845, Ferozeshah on 21–22 December, Baddowal and Aliwal in January 1846, Sobraon on 10 February with Sikh losses given at five to eight thousand and sixty-seven guns taken; the siege of Multan from 19 April 1848 to 22 January 1849, Ramnagar on 22 November 1848, Chillianwala on 13 January 1849, Gujrat on 21 February and the surrender at Rawalpindi — follow the standard reference literature and the British regimental and museum records. Casualty figures for engagements of this period are approximate on both sides and the Sikh figures are estimates by the victors. That Gough was criticised and replaced after Chillianwala, and that the losses of the two Sikh wars damaged British prestige in India, is the British Army's own retrospective assessment.

The treachery. That Lal Singh and Tej Singh were in communication with the British and that Tej Singh's withdrawal at Ferozeshah was decisive is now stated as fact in the general reference literature, and this study accepts the narrow version. The elaborated version — a specific section of the pontoon bridge at Sobraon weakened

under Tej Singh's personal order, ammunition boxes filled with sand — comes through the later Sikh tradition and popular historiography, has the tidiness this study distrusts, and is not relied on. Lal Singh's deposition by a British commission at the end of 1846, Tej Singh's elevation as a Raja under British authority, and Gulab Singh's dealings with both sides during the war are reported from the standard literature. The suggestion that Jind Kaur's government deliberately sent the army to be destroyed is an old accusation in the historiography, is contested, and is registered above without being adopted; it is the kind of claim that cannot be settled from the outcome, which is consistent with both intention and incompetence.

The treaties. The Treaty of Lahore of March 1846 (indemnity of a crore and a half, cession of the Jullundur Doab, reduction of the Sikh army), the Treaty of Amritsar of the same month transferring Jammu and Kashmir to Gulab Singh on payment of seventy-five lakhs, and the Treaty of Bhyrowal of December 1846 substituting a Council of Regency under a British Resident for the Maharani's regency, follow the standard accounts; the treaty texts have not been read for this study and should be, since the exact wording of the Amritsar instrument would be worth a good deal to the argument made above about what a conquest declines to take.

The Multan trigger. That Mulraj was required by the British-controlled Darbar at Lahore to pay an increased assessment and arrears, that he attempted to resign, and that Vans Agnew and Anderson were attacked on 20 April 1848 and killed the following day after their Sikh escort went over, follows the standard accounts including the British ones. The identification of this as the same instrument analysed in Module 2 of this study is this study's own reading and is offered as such.

Army figures. The regular establishment of about twenty-nine thousand with a hundred and ninety-two guns in 1839, and over eighty thousand by 1845, is from the general literature; Sita Ram Kohli's compilation from the Khalsa Darbar Records gives 70,721 for 1845 with a total cost of Rs 1,27,96,482, and the two sets are not straightforwardly reconcilable. The discrepancy is left standing rather than smoothed, and the argument above requires only that the force grew very substantially, which no source disputes.

The framework material. The account of structural change as arriving through elite fracture, exhaustion, conquest or overproduction, and never from the rising of the ruled, is the collection's own, set out in *Elite Chaos*, which credits Skocpol on state breakdown, Goldstone and Turchin on elite overproduction, and Acemoglu and Robinson on the franchise as credible commitment. This module tests that account rather than restating it.

MODULE 11

No Cock Crowing in the Morning

The grim accounting — what the sword took across a hundred and one years, what the metabolic note cost when it was called in a valley that had no reserve left, and why an order that fell before it naturalised leaves a bill nobody can close.

What is being counted, and why

An armed body took power in the Punjab, held it, and lost it. This module counts what that cost.

The count has two columns and they are counted differently. The **sword** column is the deaths that a weapon caused: massacres, sieges, campaigns, executions, battles. It is the column histories are written from and it is usually the smaller of the two.

The **metabolic** column is subtler and often larger. A settled agrarian society is not living within the land's natural carrying capacity; it is living above it, on the strength of coordination — irrigation kept up, seed grain held back, surplus stored, food moved from a good district to a bad one, and a demand on the cultivator that leaves him something in reserve. That coordination is a loan against the land, and the loan carries a note. When the coordination is disrupted — by conquest, by civil war, by an extraction regime that eats the reserve — the note is called, and it is paid in famine, in disease among the weakened, and in emigration. It does not have to be paid at the moment of disruption. It is paid the first time something goes wrong, and what determines whether it can be paid is whether anyone left a buffer.

Both columns are attempted here, both are ugly, and the numbers in both are estimates made by interested parties. Every figure below is given as a range and every range is attributed, because in this case the counting is itself contested between national historiographies that are still arguing.

And there is a third item, which is not a number: what happened to the memory of the violence. That is the subject the module closes on, and the finding there is the one worth carrying away.

The sword: the first column, and its largest single entry

The window is 1748 to 1849 and the largest single event in it falls in the fifteenth year.

On the night of 5 February 1762, during his sixth invasion, Ahmad Shah Durrani covered something near two hundred kilometres and two river crossings in under forty-eight hours and caught the Dal Khalsa encamped at Kup-Rahira, about twelve kilometres north of Malerkotla. The Sikhs were moving their *vahir* — the slow baggage train — south towards the Malwa, and could not use the mobility that was their only tactical asset. The killing ran along a stretch of forty-five to fifty kilometres of road, through the villages of Kup, Rahira, Kutba, Bahmania, Gehal and Hathur.

The Sikhs call it the Vadda Ghallughara, the great massacre. The figures given for the dead run from five thousand to fifty thousand, with most accounts settling between ten and thirty thousand. Malcolm, writing fifty years afterwards from Sikh informants, put the loss at upwards of twenty thousand.

The composition of the dead is the part that is fought over, and this study will not pretend the fight is settled. The Sikh tradition and the modern Sikh historiography hold that the majority were non-combatants — the women, children and old men of the *vahir* — and it is on that basis that the event is called a massacre rather than a battle. Against this, Afghan and Pashtun historiography argues that no eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century source records the presence of Sikh women and children, and points in particular to Tahmas Khan Miskin, who took part in the action and whose *Tahmasnama* describes only Sikh cavalry and infantry.

That is a real objection resting on a participant's account, and it deserves to be stated rather than brushed past. What can be said is that the Sikhs were moving a baggage train, that a baggage train of a body living in the field for a generation contains its families, and that Miskin was describing what he fought rather than what he rode over afterwards. The honest position is that the dead numbered in the tens of thousands, that they included non-combatants in a proportion this study cannot establish, and that both historiographies making the claim are doing so inside a live political argument about whose ancestors did what to whom.

Two entries belong immediately beside it. Sixteen years before, in the spring of 1746, the Chhota Ghallughara had cost something between seven and eleven thousand, on figures descending through the same nineteenth-century Sikh chronicles. And in October 1762 the Sikhs returned and razed the villages of Kup, Rahira, Kutba and Bahmania, whose inhabitants had turned away or killed Sikhs seeking shelter during the massacre. The reprisal is recorded by the tradition that records the massacre, which is a point in that tradition's favour.

The sword: the rest of the column, and what cannot be counted

After 1762 the sword column becomes a list of events without numbers, and the honest thing is to say so rather than manufacture arithmetic.

The Punjab was crossed by invading armies nine or ten times between 1747 and 1767. What that did to the people living on the plain — crops burned or requisitioned, villages sacked, cattle driven, captives carried off — is recorded qualitatively in every account and quantitatively in none.

The internal wars of the confederacy ran from 1765 to 1799: chiefs who had sworn together at Amritsar killing each other over villages, in a country where, as Malcolm put it, there were few villages whose rule was not contested between brothers or near relations. Ganda Singh Bhangi was killed near Dinanagar in 1775. There are no casualty figures for any of it.

Ranjit Singh's conquests ran from 1799 to 1837. Multan was stormed on 2 June 1818 after an eleven-week siege, and Muzaffar Khan and several of his sons were killed making a sortie. Kashmir was taken at Shopian in July 1819, the Afghans beaten at Nowshera in 1823, Peshawar occupied and annexed by 1834, and the frontier fighting continued to Jamrud in 1837. This study has found no casualty figures for these campaigns that it is willing to reproduce; the reference literature offers round numbers with no visible provenance, and the correct entry in the column is *unknown, substantial*.

The Kashmir tariff belongs here too and cannot be quantified either. A schedule under which a Sikh who killed a Kashmiri paid the government sixteen to twenty rupees, and the dead man's family four rupees or two according to his religion, will have produced deaths at a rate nobody recorded, precisely because the schedule existed to make recording unnecessary.

Then the court killings of 1839 to 1845: four maharajas, two wazirs, a regent, a prince, the Sandhanwalia family destroyed, and — on the report of the court's own diarist — the pregnant widows of a dead sovereign given abortifacients so that no posthumous claimant could appear. A small number of deaths by any statistical standard, and the ones that determined everything else.

And then the wars.

At Ferozeshah on 21–22 December 1845 the Sikh dead are given at about two thousand and the British at 694 killed and 1,721 wounded. At Sobraon on 10 February 1846 the Sikh dead are given at five to eight thousand, with sixty-seven guns taken, against British casualties of 2,383; a large share of the Sikh dead drowned in the Sutlej when the bridge of boats failed during the retreat. Mudki and Aliwal add more that is not separately recorded.

For the whole of the second war of 1848–49 the figures given are 6,500 Sikh casualties — 2,584 killed, 2,583 wounded, 1,333 missing — against 8,403 British and Company casualties, of whom 3,379 were killed.

Stop on that comparison, because it is not what a reader expects of a colonial conquest. **In the war that ended the Sikh state, the conquering army lost more men than the army it destroyed.** Chillianwala on 13 January 1849 cost Gough his command and, on the British Army's own later assessment, permanently damaged the aura of European invincibility in India. Whatever else the Khalsa army was by 1849 — unpaid, twice sold by its commanders, fighting for a state that had already been signed away — it was not a walkover, and the men who beat it paid for it.

The metabolic column, and the valley that had no reserve

Now the second column, and here the case delivers something better than an example. It delivers a controlled comparison inside one state.

In the autumn of 1831 an unusually early snowfall came down on the Kashmir valley and destroyed the standing paddy crop. What followed is remembered as Sher Singh's famine, after the governor — a son of Ranjit Singh — in whose tenure it broke.

The severity was not in the snow. The mechanism is stated plainly in the modern accounts: the crop failure was compounded by the seizure and withholding of grain, by hoarding, and by heavy revenue exactions. And the reason it could be so compounded was in place a decade earlier, in Moorcroft's account of a valley in which only a small fraction of the cultivable surface was under crop, every trade was taxed, the people were subject to extortion by the officers of the government beyond the published schedule, and men were leaving for the plains because they were starving at home.

That is what a country with no reserve looks like *before* anything goes wrong. The revenue farm had been eating the buffer for years. When the snow came, there was nothing behind it.

The consequences are given in figures that must be handled carefully, because they derive from two travellers' guesses. Moorcroft in 1823 put the valley's population at about eight hundred thousand. Baron Hügel, fourteen years later, put it at about two hundred thousand. Some accounts convert the difference into a death toll of six hundred thousand.

That number should not be used. Neither traveller counted anything; no census was taken in the Sikh period; and a very large part of the difference is emigration rather than mortality — the survivors gathered at Amritsar and dispersed from there to Delhi, Calcutta and Banaras, and the flow continued for decades, to the point where the Punjab census of 1891 re-enumerated over a hundred and eleven thousand Kashmir-

born Muslims settled in the Punjab, a figure equivalent to the whole population of Srinagar. The honest statement is that the famine killed on a very large scale, that the deaths are not countable from the available evidence, and that a substantial and separately significant share of the population loss was people walking out.

What is not in doubt is the texture. When Colonel Mihan Singh arrived as governor in 1833 or 1834 he looked out from the balcony of the Shergarhi palace at Srinagar and saw not a single lamp lit in the city; and in the morning he heard no cock crowing, every fowl in the place having been eaten.

The response, when it came, was real and should be entered. Twenty thousand maunds of corn were sent from the Punjab, with further grain bought at Muzaffarabad, Rajouri and Kishtwar. Grain was sold at controlled prices, hoarding was moved against, dues were remitted. Grain was distributed through the mosques and the temples alike; in the towns the troops assembled people in rows in open ground and issued a fixed daily ration by family. The land revenue in Kashmir was afterwards reduced to half the produce and interest-free loans were offered to cultivators.

All of that is a state doing what a state should. All of it arrived after the fowls had been eaten, and — as this study established when examining what Lahore was capable of knowing about its own provinces — it arrived because a farmed province in extremity eventually stops producing the instalments, which is the only signal such an arrangement is built to transmit.

The comparison the same state provides

Now put the plains beside the valley, because they were under the same crown in the same decade and they came out differently.

In the Bari Doab the demand was heavy — up to half the crop — and it was taken by *batai*, a share of what was actually there, at the threshing floor. A ruined harvest produced a small payment. Villages that lost land to the rivers were relieved of their share of the liabilities; the surviving orders of the Maharaja contain instructions granting lenient terms to exactly such places. The old canal above Lahore was cleared and kept.

There is no Punjab plains famine in this period that this study has been able to identify.

In Kashmir the right to collect had been sold. The contractor's horizon was his lease; the schedule was whatever the trade would bear; the reserve went into the *dagshawl* duty and thence, as bales on a shelf, into a treasury four hundred miles away. When the weather turned, a hundred and twenty thousand people who made shawls for a living had no grain and no claim on anyone.

So the metabolic finding here is not the ordinary one about conquest disrupting coordination. Nobody's irrigation was smashed and no army marched through the valley in 1831. **The debt was called by weather, and whether it could be paid had been decided years earlier by the method of extraction.** One state, one decade, two revenue systems, and the difference between them is the difference between a bad harvest and a city with no fowl left in it.

The third item: what happened to the memory

The framework's usual observation about a long-settled order is that, given enough time, people stop being able to see that violence made the arrangement. The conquest becomes the furniture of reality; the fact that somebody's ancestors took the ground by force stops being an available thought, not because it is denied but because it has become as unremarkable as the weather.

The Sikh order never got there, and the reason is simply that it did not last long enough.

Fifty years from Lahore to annexation, a hundred and one from the constitution of the Dal Khalsa. That is two generations. It is not enough to convert a conquest into scenery, and the evidence that it was not enough is that every major item in this module's two columns is still being argued about, in public, right now, between historiographies with modern national commitments.

The proportion of non-combatants at Kup in 1762 is argued between Sikh and Pashtun writers, each citing sources. The character of Sikh rule in Kashmir is argued inside a live dispute over the legitimacy of what came after it. The figure of six hundred thousand famine dead circulates in one literature and the picture of Ranjit Singh as an exemplary secular ruler circulates in another, and the two are describing the same decade.

Compare what lies underneath. The Arab conquest of Sind and Multan in the eighth century, the Ghaznavid annexation of the Punjab in the eleventh, the Ghurid conquest in the twelfth — nobody argues about the casualty figures at Pakpattan. That violence is a thousand years buried and the order it built had become, by 1748, simply the shape of the world for the majority of the province's people. That is what full naturalisation looks like, and this study's opening described the machinery that produced it: shrines with mapped jurisdictions, hereditary custodians, a calendar, a *maktab* in every village, eight centuries of holding children.

So the accounting has a structural entry that is not a number. **An order that falls before it naturalises leaves its violence itemised and visible, and therefore permanently contested.** The Sikh state built no formation, as this study found at

length; it endowed everyone's and designed none. It then ended after two generations. The combination guarantees that its bill stays open — that there is no settled account of it, no consensus about what it was, and no possibility of one, because the parties who would have to agree were never formed by it into a common way of seeing.

That is not a moral verdict. It is a mechanical consequence, and it explains something a reader of this study will have noticed: that the sources for nearly every load-bearing figure in these eleven modules have had to be flagged, and that the flags have so often had the same shape — a tradition preserving what its heirs need and a rival tradition denying it. That is what an unfinished naturalisation looks like from inside the archive.

Reading the accounting against the framework

Three contributions.

The metabolic note is not called by the disruption; it is called by the first shock, and whether it can be paid was decided earlier by the method of extraction. The collection's account of metabolic debt has run through disruption — conquest or revolution breaking the coordination that held a population above the land's carrying capacity, and the note falling due. Kashmir in 1831 refines it. No coordination was broken. No army marched. An early snow fell on a valley that had been under a revenue farm for a decade, in which most of the cultivable land was already out of crop and the cultivators were already emigrating, and the note was presented immediately because there was no reserve behind it.

The general form: **the size of the metabolic bill is set not by the shock but by the buffer, and the buffer is a direct function of how the state takes its revenue.** A demand that falls with the harvest leaves a reserve by construction. A fixed demand, or a farmed one, consumes the reserve in good years and finds nothing there in bad. The diagnostic is therefore the same question this study asked of the cost column: does the demand know what the harvest was? Where it does not, the state is running its population without a buffer, and the famine is already written — it is waiting only on the weather.

The control case makes this unusually clean. One state, one decade: the plains under crop-share with remissions and no famine; the valley under a farm and a catastrophe. The variable is not climate, not creed, not distance and not the ruler's disposition. It is the contract.

And the relief arrives on the schedule of the information system, not of the emergency. Lahore's response to the Kashmir famine — grain from the Punjab and from Muzaffarabad, Rajouri and Kishtwar, controlled sales, action against hoarders,

remissions, rations issued by the troops — was substantial and competent. It came after the city had eaten its poultry. That follows from a finding two modules back: a farmed province transmits one signal, the instalment, and a government that has purchased the right not to know its provinces learns of a catastrophe when the payment fails. **Where extraction is farmed, expect famine relief to be late by the length of a payment cycle**, and expect it to be well executed when it comes, because the failure is not of capacity but of eyesight.

Naturalisation is what converts violence into scenery, and an order that ends inside two generations leaves an itemised bill that cannot be closed. The collection has treated naturalisation as the thing that makes an old order cheap to hold. This module identifies its other product, which is *silence about the founding*. Where the process completes, the conquest stops being a subject; where it does not, every number stays contested and every archive stays partisan.

The Sikh state is a rare, clean instance of the incomplete case, and the reason is specifiable rather than accidental: it declined to build a formation of its own, subsidising every incumbent one instead, and then it ended after fifty years. Neither condition alone would have been sufficient. Together they mean that no shared way of seeing the Punjab's eighteenth century was ever installed in anybody, and so the eighteenth century remains, two hundred years later, a live argument conducted by heirs.

The reading rule that follows is practical and this study has been applying it throughout without stating it: **where the figures for a founding violence are still being disputed by identifiable modern parties, the order that committed it did not last long enough to naturalise — and the dispute is therefore evidence about the order's duration and formation, not merely noise in the sources.** A settled account is the mark of a completed conquest. An open one is the mark of a conquest that was interrupted.

A note on sources. No primary text is quoted verbatim in this module and every figure in it is an estimate. That is the module's central caution and it should not be softened.

The sword column. For the Vadda Ghallughara of 5–6 February 1762: the range of five thousand to fifty thousand dead, with most accounts between ten and thirty thousand, is as given across the reference literature; Malcolm's figure of upwards of twenty thousand is from his *Sketch of the Sikhs* (1812), a public-domain text, and is his informants' rather than his own count. The geography — a forty-five to fifty kilometre stretch from Kup-Rahira through Kutba, Bahmania, Gehal and Hathur, some twelve kilometres north of Malerkotla — follows the standard accounts. The claim that most

of the dead were non-combatants is the Sikh historiography's; the counter-claim that no eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century source records women and children present, and that Tahmas Khan Miskin's *Tahmasnama* — a participant's account — describes only Sikh cavalry and infantry, is made in Afghan and Pashtun historiography. The *Tahmasnama* has not been consulted for this study and the dispute is registered rather than resolved. Both bodies of writing on this event are produced inside a continuing national argument and neither should be read as disinterested. The Chhota Ghallughara range of seven to eleven thousand is carried forward from this study's opening, with the provenance recorded there. The razing of Kup, Rahira, Kutba and Bahmania in October 1762 is recorded within the Sikh tradition itself.

Battle casualties. The figures for Ferozeshah (about two thousand Sikh dead; 694 British killed and 1,721 wounded), Sobraon (five to eight thousand Sikh dead, sixty-seven guns taken, 2,383 British casualties) and the second war as a whole (6,500 Sikh casualties comprising 2,584 killed, 2,583 wounded and 1,333 missing, against 8,403 British and Company casualties including 3,379 killed) are from the standard reference literature and ultimately from British returns. British returns of their own losses are reasonably reliable; British estimates of enemy losses are not, and the Sikh figures should be read as the victors' impressions. No figures are offered here for Ranjit Singh's campaigns of 1818 to 1837, because the ones in circulation have no visible provenance.

The metabolic column. Sher Singh's famine is dated to 1831 by some accounts and to 1832–33 by others, and the discrepancy is probably a matter of when the effects were felt rather than of the triggering snowfall; both datings are in the literature. The mechanism — an early autumn snowfall destroying the standing paddy, compounded by grain seizure, hoarding and heavy revenue exaction — follows the modern accounts. **The figure of six hundred thousand deaths is not used by this study and should not be used by anyone.** It is derived by subtracting Baron Hügel's population estimate of about two hundred thousand, made around 1837, from William Moorcroft's of about eight hundred thousand, made in 1823. Neither man counted anything, no census exists for the Sikh period in Kashmir, and a large and separately documented share of the difference is emigration rather than mortality. The re-enumeration of over a hundred and eleven thousand Kashmir-born Muslims in the Punjab census of 1891 is reported from the Kashmiri literature and indicates the scale of the outflow over the following decades. Mihan Singh's observation from the Shergarhi balcony — no lamp lit in Srinagar, no cock crowing in the morning, the fowls having been eaten — is reported at second hand from the Kashmiri historiography and has not been traced to its original source; it is used here as testimony to texture rather than as evidence of any quantity, and it is the module's title, which readers should weigh accordingly. The relief

measures — twenty thousand maunds of corn from the Punjab, purchases at Muzaffarabad, Rajouri and Kishtwar, controlled sales, action against hoarding, remissions, distribution through mosques and temples, and rationing by troops — are likewise reported from the modern literature. The Kashmiri historiography of the Sikh and Dogra periods is written inside a live dispute about the legitimacy of subsequent arrangements in that territory, and this study has tried to use it for mechanism and texture while declining its numbers.

Carried forward. Moorcroft on the condition of Kashmir in 1822–23, the fine schedule for the killing of a Kashmiri, the *dagshawl* duty, the emigration over the Pir Panjal, the *batai* demand and the river-damage remissions in the plains, the list of farmed territories, and the account of what a farmed province can and cannot transmit to its government, are all established in Modules 5, 6 and 7 of this study with their provenance and cautions recorded there.

The framework material. The account of metabolic debt — that intensive agriculture and coordination lift a population above the land's natural carrying capacity, and that disruption calls the note in famine and disease — is the collection's own, as is the account of naturalisation by which a built order becomes the furniture of reality. This module tests both.

MODULE 12

Forty-Six Years

Convergence and divergence — where this order behaved exactly like every other in the collection, the places where it did not, and what a state is left holding when it has asked nobody to believe anything.

Where this case converges

Take the ordinary findings first, because they are the ones that establish the case is not exotic.

A body of armed men took a country and made a settlement of who got what. The settlement was enforced by a floor of force whose composition, cost and recruitment can be counted from the paymaster's records. Extraction ran at somewhere between a third and a half of the crop and was sorted so that some populations paid far more than others. The information the centre held about its own provinces was determined by how it collected, and it was blind precisely where it had contracted the collecting out. Liberties, where they existed at all, came from fights inside the hierarchy and never from the ruled. The ruled, at the extreme of oppression, emigrated rather than rose, and were never at any point a threat to the arrangement. And when the arrangement ended, it ended through the hierarchy — fracture first, then exhaustion, then a rival hierarchy collecting.

The order it displaced was itself a naturalised former conquest: an Islamic Punjab built over eight centuries by shrines with mapped jurisdictions and hereditary custodians until it was simply the shape of the world for the majority of the province. The order that displaced it in turn inherited its administrative vocabulary wholesale — *pargana*, *diwan*, *jagir*, the Persian chancery, the doab names coined by a Mughal revenue minister in the 1590s — and kept every word.

None of that distinguishes the Punjab. It is the ordinary condition of every case in this collection.

Where this case diverges

The divergences are what the study contributes, and several of them are corrections rather than exceptions.

The consideration was not deleted. The modern colonial settlement buys a warlord's compliance and strips his capacity for organised violence with the same

instrument; the whole art of it is paying a man to stop being a warlord. Ranjit Singh's settlement was built around the opposite clause. The service *jagir* granted land against a stated contingent — a hundred horse at Kasur, sixty at Nurpur, fifty at Sahiwal, thirty at Pindi Bhattian — and the British revenue administration afterwards recorded that the Sikh sardars held their estates on condition of furnishing horsemen in time of war. He paid warlords to go on being warlords in his service. And in the same forty years he stripped the retinues of the men who shared his founding and granted five hill territories and four hundred horsemen to three Dogra troopers from Jammu who shared none of it.

The anchor was impersonal, and the coinage proves it was chosen. Across five reigns, fourteen mints and half a century of sovereign coinage, no Sikh Empire rupee carries a ruler's name or portrait. The legends invoke Nanak's sword and Gobind Singh's victory, and the state was the *Sarkar Khalsa*. Forty miles south of the Sutlej, Sikh Jats of the same descent and the same initiation struck the couplet of Ahmad Shah Durrani on their principal coinage for over a century, at a mint they named for Sarhind. Two branches of one community, one currency zone, opposite answers — which establishes that the legend on a coin records whose belief a state cannot do without.

A fourth settlement fiction: default. Not vacancy, not recognition, not divisibility, but *arrears*. The chief's title is never questioned; he is declared to be behind on a tribute the creditor sets, and the estate passes in satisfaction. Sahiwal at twelve thousand rupees in 1809 and eighty-five thousand in 1810, annexed within months. Jhang at sixty thousand in 1803 and a lakh in 1816, confiscated in 1817. The same four-step shape across a Baloch zamindar, a Sial, a Rajput and an Afghan governor is one instrument, not four coincidences. Its work is annexation without a *casus belli*, and it requires a prior tributary relation — which is why a sea power arriving from outside cannot use it and must reach for vacancy or recognition instead.

Formation had a third option, and it looks like generosity. The collection had two: form the population, which is expensive and admits them, or withhold formation, as European colonial administrations did, and let the incumbent formation hold the field. This order did neither. It endowed the *maktab*, the *pathshala* and the *dharamsala* alike out of the revenue of a conquered province, and designed none of them. The result was identical to withholding — the state never became an item in anybody's account of who is worth believing — and it was reached by paying rather than by refusing.

And the abstention operated on the ruler's own community. The Sikh shrines where Sikh children learned Gurmukhi were held by hereditary Udasi and Nirmala *mahants* who had never taken the Khalsa initiation, kept images, and observed caste at

the *prasad* — and Ranjit Singh's revenue-free grants funded them. The Khalsa state paid non-Khalsa priests to form Khalsa children.

Recruitment formation and reproduction formation are different machines. The Khalsa's was an adult initiation taken at cost in front of witnesses, and it produced men who went to the block a hundred a day in 1716 without one recanting. It cannot be administered to a child, so it never became the ground of anybody's self; it does not compound, because every member must be recruited individually in every generation; and it is fed by the persecution it exists to survive, so it weakens exactly as it succeeds. When membership became the road to a *jagir* and a share of Multan's revenue, the cost that made the display credible was gone.

The exit that disciplines a floor is the soldier's, not the subject's. Malcolm identified it in 1805: a Sikh horseman could abandon a chief he disliked because the distance of a few miles put him under a rival's protection, which is why the lowest horseman took an independent style and the highest chief conciliated. Ranjit Singh did not defeat that arrangement. He removed the destination.

The default property depends on tenure, not on value, and its tell is inspection. A *jagir* was a life estate reverting at death and re-grantable at the ruler's sole discretion — to the heirs, to one of them, or to a stranger. So no grantee held anything his son would take by right, and on the morning of 27 June 1839 the entire elite became claimants simultaneously. And an arrangement possessing the default property does not need auditing; where the sovereign is personally reviving the Mughal practice of branding horses so his own great men cannot cheat on their contingents, the arrangement is running on his attention and its lifespan is his.

The floor itself can overbreed. Elite overproduction usually means surplus claimants to office. Between 1839 and 1845 the Lahore army roughly tripled while the state conquered nothing, because in a succession where no faction could claim the robe the only currency in which a claim could be pressed was enlisted men, and every bidder enlarged the army.

An apex that cannot pay its floor pays it in authority. The court conceded the soldiers' councils because it had run out of money, and authority once paid out is not recoverable when the money returns. That converges with a finding this collection reached in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth — that the currency in which an elite is bought is set by what the ruler owns that the elite does not, and that payments in law ratchet because they cannot be resumed. The Polish kings paid in law because they had no land to convert. The Lahore court paid in authority because it had no coin. Same mechanism, different scarcity.

A concession from a factional auction is a price, not a right. The soldiers' councils of 1841 to 1845 had no charter, no revenue, no court and no external guarantor. They were never defeated; the bidding simply stopped, and they ceased. What builds a constitution is auctions *recurring*, until each new faction finds citing the last concession cheaper than fighting afresh. The Punjab had one auction.

Revenue farming destroys information as deliberately as it stabilises income, and it sets the metabolic bill. Crop-share assessment cannot function without generating knowledge; a farm replaces all of it with a figure. Moorcroft could see Kashmir failing in 1823; Lahore relieved it in 1832, after a famine. And when the early snow came in 1831 the valley had no buffer, because the farm had been eating it for a decade — while the plains, under an elastic demand with remissions when the river moved, came through the same decade without a famine. One state, one climate, two contracts.

And an order that falls before it naturalises leaves an itemised bill nobody can close. Fifty years is two generations, which is not enough to convert violence into scenery. Which is why the proportion of non-combatants at Kup in 1762 is argued today between Sikh and Pashtun writers citing sources at each other, while nobody disputes casualty figures at Pakpattan from the eighth century.

The thing that makes this case worth having

But the finding that makes this study valuable to the collection is none of those. It concerns the central proposition of the whole framework, and it forces a distinction the framework has not been making.

The proposition is that a robe makes a floor cheap: that where the ruled believe the arrangement is right, force can be thin, and where they do not, the state must spend on surveillance and garrisons what belief would have supplied free.

The Sikh Punjab is the limiting case, and it points the other way.

For fifty years, better than half the population of that country was asked to believe nothing whatever. The coin invoked two Gurus. The state's name was the initiated body's. The proclamation was timed to Baisakhi and performed by a descendant of Nanak. The sacred centre was Amritsar, the script was Gurmukhi, the calendar was the Khalsa's, and the war cry meant nothing to anyone outside. The community all of that addressed was, on the best modern estimates, somewhere near a tenth of the people it ruled, in a Muslim-majority province.

And the order was not expensive to hold. There was no rising in fifty years. The Punjab was not a garrison state internally; the army was pointed outward, at Multan,

Kashmir and the Khyber. A Muslim cultivator in the Rechna Doab paid his revenue to men who came for it twice a year and there was no garrison in his village.

Why did he comply? Not because he believed. He complied because compliance was rational, and the framework's other machinery explains it completely. He was capturable — a walled village on an open plain, a lineage share he could not sell, and no better country within reach. The demand was heavy but elastic, and a failed harvest produced a small payment rather than a debt. His own kin did the collecting, because the village was assessed as a village and the council divided it. And he was getting the largest single benefit any Punjabi received in this entire study: after nine or ten invading armies in twenty years, forty-six years in which none came at all.

So the first half of the finding is that **an order can run for half a century, competently and without unusual coercion, on cost, benefit and capturability alone, with no belief from the majority at all.** The robe is not what makes an ordinary Tuesday cheap. Benefit and the closed exit do that.

The second half is what the robe was actually for, and it shows up only once.

In December 1845 the Lahore army crossed the Sutlej, and in the four years that followed the state was beaten twice, indemnified, garrisoned, administered by a Resident and annexed. In all of it, the Punjab's Muslim majority did not defend the Sikh state. Neither did its Hindu administrative class, who moved to the conquerors and were rewarded — Dina Nath had run the accounts through Ranjit Singh, four successors, a regency and a Resident, and the British kept him. Neither did the European officers, who had left in the early 1840s with their savings. The men who did fight and die at Sobraon and Chillianwala were the Khalsa soldiery — the one population the robe had ever addressed.

That is the finding, and it revises the framework's central claim rather than merely illustrating it. **The robe is not an operating expense. It is a reserve.** A well-provisioned order with a closed exit does not need it on any ordinary day and will not notice its absence for decades. What it buys is the single hour in which the cost-benefit calculation goes the other way — when the revenue collector cannot protect you, when a rival army is on the river, when there is a real choice between defending the arrangement and standing aside. In that hour the state draws on whatever belief it has installed, and a state that installed none has nothing to draw.

The Lahore government had, in 1845, four decades of revenue receipts from the majority of its subjects and no other relationship with them of any kind. And Module 4 supplies the mechanism, because the reserve is not accumulated by rhetoric: **the only thing that installs a defence-in-the-hour is having held the population's children**, and this state had endowed everybody's schools and designed none.

The case for the defence

Now the counter-position, at full weight, because it is strong and because serious people hold it.

The alternative was not a gentler Punjab. It was the Punjab of 1747 to 1767: nine or ten crossings by invading armies in twenty years, standing crops burned or requisitioned, villages sacked, cattle driven off, people carried away as slaves — on average every other year, to a plain whose people could not move their fields. Ranjit Singh ended that, and it stayed ended for forty-six years. Malcolm, riding through in 1805, recorded good order and safe roads in a country that within living memory had been a highway for other men's armies. That is not a sentimental achievement. It is measurable in the absence of events, and it is the largest single improvement in the life of an ordinary Punjabi anywhere in this study.

He was the one Indian ruler the British never beat. In the decades of his reign the Marathas were broken, Mysore destroyed, Awadh hollowed, Sindh taken, the Nizam subordinated. The Punjab was not. And when it finally was, it took two wars, and in the second of them the conquering army lost more men than the army it destroyed.

The confessional record is remarkable by the standards of its age. A Muslim foreign minister who negotiated for a state whose coin proclaimed Guru Nanak's sovereignty. A Hindu governor of Multan for close to a quarter of a century. An artillery — the state's decisive arm — predominantly Muslim. Revenue-free grants to mosques, temples and gurdwaras out of the same treasury. Muslim personal law left to the *qazis*. Ghulam Murtaza of Qadian invited back and restored to his ancestral estate. No forced conversion anywhere in the record. And a Brahmin-born Sikh officer declining the revenue of Baba Farid's shrine at Pakpattan on the ground that it was a holy man's place. Set that beside the penal codes of contemporary Europe, or beside most of what was happening in India in the same decades.

The cultivator was not ruined. Browne in 1788 and Malcolm in 1812 say the same thing from opposite ends of the period: a moderate collection, mostly in kind, hereditary tenures untouched, the chief never taking his whole share. The British replaced it with a lower demand fixed in cash and produced, within twenty years, exactly the indebtedness and famine borrowing that four decades of *batai* had not.

The barrier was service, not birth. A distiller's descendant led the Dal Khalsa and put his caste name on the coin. Men of the castes the older order ranked lowest held commands. Three troopers from Jammu became rajas. Bhawani Das walked in from Kabul and built the treasury.

And he did not behave like a dynast. He sat on no throne, wore no crown, struck no coin in his own name, and — on the tradition's account — stood bare-shouldered

before a congregation at Amritsar and accepted its judgement. The collapse came after him, in six years of murders he could not have foreseen, and was completed by an industrial power that would have arrived eventually regardless.

A study that counts the price and does not count what was bought is not an accounting. It is an indictment with footnotes.

The answer

That case is largely correct and this study will not pretend otherwise. Three things need saying in reply, and none of them is a dismissal.

First: the defence carries the running and does not carry the architecture. Everything about how the order operated day to day is carried, and this study has said so at each point — the elastic revenue, the remissions, the religious peace, the mobility by service, the safety of the roads, the forty-six years. Take all of it as established.

What the defence does not carry is the design: the resumable tenure that made every grantee a claimant at the succession; the anchor that made the founder unfalsifiable and left his heirs nothing; the formation endowed for everyone and designed by no one; the provinces sold to contractors; the retinues taken from the Khalsa sardars and granted to the Dogras.

And there is a clean test, which the collection has used before: **if the costs were the price of survival, they should have fallen when survival was secured.** The Sutlej was fixed by treaty in 1809. The Afghans were finished as a threat to the Punjab after 1819 and beaten at Nowshera in 1823. Peshawar was annexed in 1834 and the frontier stood at the Khyber. In precisely those years of maximum security: no school was built; the Sarbat Khalsa was not restored, having last met in 1805; Kashmir remained a farmed province through twelve governors in twenty-seven years and had its demand reduced only after a famine; the *dagh* was revived so that the Maharaja could verify that his own great men were not cheating him on their horses; and the Dogras received Jammu, Bhoti, Bandralta, Chenini and Kishtwar for four hundred horsemen.

Nothing loosened when the pressure came off. Which means these were not emergency measures. They were the building, and each of them is what failed.

Second: the achievement and the cost were one instrument described twice. They can be paired one to one, and the pairing is the whole history of the state.

The paid standing infantry abolished the soldier's exit and made the Punjab one country instead of a hundred and twenty-five — and gave seventy thousand men a single identical interest, which twelve chiefs holding twelve heritable shares could never have had. The anonymous coin made the founder immune to every scandal and denied every rival Sikh chief the only argument that could have unseated him — and handed

his son an army, a treasury and a chair, and nothing else. The resumable *jagir* made the elite obedient for forty years — and converted the whole of it into claimants on a single morning. The revenue farm made the income of a sprawling conquest predictable — and blinded the government to a province emptying out. Subsidising every formation bought fifty years of religious peace — and left nobody in the country with a formed reason to defend the state. Paying warlords to keep their retinues secured a frontier from Multan to the Khyber — and armed the family that took the kingdom apart.

Not two policies. One construction, working and then killing, in that order.

Third, and this is the hardest: the tolerance and the tariff are not in tension, and resolving them into a verdict is the mistake both national stories make.

The defence's best evidence is a Muslim foreign minister and a mosque endowed from a Sikh treasury. The prosecution's best evidence is a written schedule under which a Sikh who killed a Kashmiri paid the government sixteen to twenty rupees, of which the family received four if the dead man was Hindu and two if he was Muslim. Both are documented, and both are the same government in the same decade.

They are not a contradiction to be resolved, and the state was not tolerant *or* oppressive. It was **sorted** — and the sorting variable was legible and had nothing to do with creed. Where a population supplied the floor's manpower, the benefit dial was up and the cost dial down, because extraction there damaged recruitment and because a grievance had a channel to court through kinsmen in the ranks. Where a population supplied revenue and no soldiers, the demand ran up to what could be taken and then past it. The Majha villages recruited. Kashmir made shawls. Punjabi Muslims in the core were not treated as Kashmiri Muslims were, which is exactly what a creed-based explanation cannot accommodate and a manpower-based one predicts.

That is a harder thing to say than either available story, because it takes the credit away from the ruler's tolerance and the blame away from his bigotry, and assigns both to the arithmetic of where his soldiers came from. Naming it is not demonisation. Refusing to name it is not fairness.

Reading the whole against the framework

One contribution, and it is this study's.

The framework has held, from its foundational statement onward, that the robe makes the floor cheap — that a managed belief is what lets an order economise on force, and that the gradient from an expensive order to a self-running one is a gradient of belief.

That is right about the long run and this study does not disturb it. What the Sikh Punjab shows is that it is wrong about the short run, and that the error matters because it makes the framework misdiagnose healthy-looking orders.

For fifty years this state had no robe over the majority of its subjects and its floor was not expensive. It was not garrisoning its own villages; its army faced outward; there was no rising; the roads were safe and the revenue came in. Any observer applying the framework's usual test in 1830 — how much force is this order spending on its own population? — would have concluded that belief was doing the work, and would have been entirely wrong. Compliance was being produced by the closed exit, by an elastic demand that never bankrupted anybody, by the village doing its own collecting, and above all by forty-six years without an invading army. None of that required anyone to believe anything.

So the distinction the framework needs is this. **Cost, benefit and capturability buy compliance. The robe buys defence.** They are not substitutes and they are not measured on the same scale, because they are purchased for different occasions. Compliance is what an order needs on every ordinary day, and it can be bought entirely with material terms. Defence is what an order needs in the single hour when the material terms stop favouring it — when the collector cannot protect anybody, when a rival army is over the river, and when a subject has, for the first time in his life, a genuine choice between standing with the arrangement and standing aside.

An order can operate indefinitely without the second. It cannot survive one bad hour without it. And the absence is invisible until that hour arrives, because on every other day the arrangement looks fine.

Two corollaries follow and both are testable elsewhere.

The reserve is installed in childhood or not at all. It cannot be bought at the crisis, purchased with a late concession, or manufactured by proclamation, because what has to be present is not an opinion but a settled account of who counts as one's people and who is worth believing — and that is laid down before the vigilance that would screen it has finished growing. A state that endowed every school and designed none had, in December 1845, exactly nothing installed anywhere. **Read a state's formation policy as a forecast of who will fight for it.**

And the emigration is the same finding in its other form. The Kashmiris at the extreme of extraction did not rise and did not stay; they walked over a pass in hundreds and took their looms to Amritsar. A population that has been given no account of the arrangement will neither defend it nor destroy it. It will leave, or it will stand aside, and both are what an absent robe looks like from the outside.

The Punjab of 1849 had three layers of naturalised conquest on it, and the Sikh layer was the shallowest. Eight centuries of Islam had gone so deep that its origin as a conquest was no longer an available thought. Two centuries of Mughal administration had gone deep enough that its vocabulary was simply how administration was done. Fifty years of the Sarkar Khalsa had not gone deep enough to be anything but a government — which is why, when the government fell, nothing underneath it had changed, and why the argument about what it was is still running two hundred years later among people who were never formed by it into a common way of seeing.

That is the last thing this study has to report, and it is not a judgement on the men who built the state. They built a floor that worked, a settlement that held, an extraction machine that funded an army no neighbour could match, and a religious peace that was genuinely unusual in its century. They did not build the one thing that would have been worth anything on the day the calculation changed, and there is no evidence that anybody at Lahore ever understood that this was a thing a state could build.

A note on sources. This module quotes nothing that has not already been quoted, sourced and qualified in the eleven modules preceding it. Every factual claim above — the coin legends and the Phulkian comparison, the horsemen quotas in the service *jagirs*, the tribute sequences at Sahiwal and Jhang, the *dharmarth* grants and the Udasi custodianship, the Surman and Stephenson letter of 1716, Malcolm on the horseman's exit and on the condition of the Punjab Muslims, Moorcroft on Kashmir and the graded fine for a killing, the Khalsa Darbar muster and pay series, the list of farmed territories, the *dagh*, the resumability of the *jagir*, the succession sequence of 1839 to 1845, the constitution and acts of the army *panchayats*, Campbell on the military republic, the *Dictionary of National Biography* on Cunningham's disgrace, the terms of the treaties of 1846, the casualty figures of the two wars, and the Kashmir famine of 1831 — carries its provenance, its variants and its cautions in the module where it was first established, and those cautions are not repeated here but are not withdrawn either.

Three of them bear restating because this module leans on them hardest. The estimate that the Sikh community formed something near a tenth of the population is modern scholarship set against a much larger traditional figure, and the argument here requires only that the community addressed by the robe was a small minority, which holds across the whole plausible range. The communal composition of the army — roughly sixty per cent Sikh in the infantry and cavalry, with the artillery predominantly Muslim — is reported from a summary of Sita Ram Kohli's catalogue rather than from the catalogue itself, and it carries weight in modern argument; it should be verified before being used further. And the resumability of the Lahore *jagirs*, on which the whole account of the default in Module 8 depends, rests on the general law of *jagir*

tenure rather than on any grant instrument read for this study; the *sanads* are in the Khalsa Darbar Records and would settle it.

Comparisons within the collection. The convergence noted above with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth — that the currency in which an elite is bought is set by what the ruler owns that the elite does not, and that payments which cannot be resumed ratchet — is that study's finding, not this one's, and is applied here to a different scarcity. The test used in this module's answer to the counter-position, that costs claimed as the price of survival should fall when survival is secured, is the Meiji study's instrument and is borrowed with acknowledgement. The framework's account of formation, of elite chaos and of metabolic debt is the collection's own, set out in *The Exploit*, *Elite Chaos* and the foundational statement, and this study has tested those accounts rather than restated them.

What this study did not do. It read no Persian, no Gurmukhi and no unpublished archive. It has worked from public-domain European primary texts, from published translations flagged where they are in copyright, and from modern scholarship at second hand — principally Indu Banga, J. S. Grewal, Veena Sachdeva, Purnima Dhavan, W. H. McLeod, Richard Eaton and the doctoral literature built on the Khalsa Darbar Records. Where the eighteenth century is concerned it has depended on a tradition preserved in nineteenth-century Sikh chronicles and has said so at every load-bearing sentence. A reader who wants the case settled rather than argued should go to the Khalsa Darbar Records in the Punjab State Archives, to the four hundred and fifty Persian orders edited by Grewal and Banga, to Cunningham's last chapter and Kaye's rebuttal, and to the *sanads*. This study is a reading, held as tested and not revealed, and it expects to be corrected.